189803

AN ATTIC DREAMER

BY MICHAEL MONAHAN

AN ATTIC DREAMER
AT THE SIGN OF THE VAN
ADVENTURES IN LIFE AND LETTERS
NEW ADVENTURES
HEINRICH HEINE
NOVA HIBERNIA

AN ATTIC DREAMER

BY
MICHAEL MONAHAN

NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
MCMXXII

COPYRIGHT, 1922 BY
MITCHELL KENNERLEY

814
M734a

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

TO

FINLEY PETER DUNNE

WITH MEMORIES OF THE GREAT AGE
THAT CAME LAUGHING ARM-IN-ARM
WITH MR. DOOLEY

9803

THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY

THIS book is, in great part, the literary residuum of a small literary periodical, *The Papyrus,* personally conducted by the Author—or more truly, conducting and possessing the Author—from 1903 to 1912.

The same was not a strictly continuous performance. There were several suspensions and intermissions of varying length, which endear the broken sets of *The Papyrus* to the collector of literary curios.

I published the magazine at my own cost, which made it doubly dear to me, and I paid full price every way for my free lance and saucy independence. But it was an inspiration of youth and the courage that goes therewith, and I am glad now that I acted upon it. It is true there were times when I wanted to quit it once and forever, but no sooner had I sent out the funeral notices, etc., than I was seized with a frantic desire to dig it up again. And so it went on and on. For I could not otherwise have got the thing out of me that cried for ex-

pression, and if I had there would have been obstacles to the immediate publishing thereof which need not be dwelt upon. I therefore determined, like the excellent Mr. Howells, to be an editor myself:—a position which is of advantage to the most gifted, in the way of accosting the fickle Goddess Fame, if not actually securing her favors.

I venture to say that no literary periodical ever lived so long that had such a continuously hard time of it (being altogether without capital), or was so chronically insolvent, or, on the other hand, that so entirely paid for itself, in the view of its Conductor—I should rather say, its humble slave and worm of the dust! The mere writing of it, as I remember, the printing and the sending forth of it each month (or sometimes skip one) healed the suicidal recurring hunt for the printer's money.

I know *one* thing: print will never again look so good to me as it did when I mailed the early numbers of *The Papyrus* to a remarkably select but rather diminutive list of readers, and then waited nervously for the world's intellectual reaction. I achieved the miracle of editing and publishing and financing it for the space of nine years (including suspensions and lay-offs

for one reason or another), but I am not rich enough to own a Complete Set of it, as published:—some things must be left to the purse-proud Collector!

It will be seen from the foregoing that my book has complied with the Horatian condition—*Nonum prematur in annum*—since it has been *pressed* (if not actually suppressed) more years than nine. I dare say that, like many a greater work, it is none the worse for having so long waited its turn. Time is the best editor that the world has yet discovered. I may add that nothing is here reprinted from *The Papyrus* save what has stood the test of enduring affection and interest on the part of many readers.

I shall not deprive the acute reader of the legitimate pleasure of running down divers inconsistencies throughout the following pages. It is allowed that where inconsistency does not prove a weakness of the logical faculty, it may be a sign of mental or spiritual growth. I will leave it to the aforesaid acute reader to decide the point for or against me, merely bespeaking a charity equal to his intelligence. In spite of a few papers which have stood long in type, he

will readily divine that I care very little for polemics, but very much for Liberty and Literature. My point of sympathy with so bold an iconoclast as Ingersoll, waiving his eloquence and literary appeal, was and is in his efforts to soften and humanize the religious or, preferably, the dogmatic spirit. That there is room for such a service, who will seriously question? We are still very far from realizing the Kingdom of Love which the Nazarene came to establish amongst us.

Without presuming to supply a first aid to critics, I may perhaps be allowed to point out that my book is an adventure of the Romantic spirit, both as regards the literary studies and the sketches of life herein attempted. And this prompts a further observation, to wit, that the mingling of such different subject matter,—which yet, I hope, does not preclude a due harmony of the whole,—is something of a novelty and an experiment in this country. It is not without precedent abroad, and may indeed claim, among others, the illustrious warrant of Anatole France.

It has been remarked that nothing is so indestructible as a good book; and when I remember how we struggled monthly with that

vexatious little *Papyrus,* walking the floor o' nights with it and sparing no pains to prolong its uncertain existence—when I remember this and see how it rises again more glorious in the present incarnation, I wonder if mayhap the child shows any stigmata of the life enduring? But that is for the wise and candid reader to say.

MICHAEL MONAHAN

New York
August, 1922

I	In the Attic	17
II	The Poe Legend	22
III	In Re Colonel Ingersoll	57
IV	Richard Wagner's Romance	90
V	In the Red Room	104
VI	Saint Mark	115
VII	The Poet's Atonement	127
VIII	Children of the Age	135
IX	The Black Friar	144
X	Lafcadio Hearn	152
XI	The Defence of Damien	172
XII	A Port of Age	181
XIII	The Kings	197
XIV	Louis the Grand	206
XV	Dining with Schopenhauer	214
XVI	On Letters	226
XVII	The Song that is Solomon's	235

XVIII	In Praise of Life	240
XIX	The Forbidden Way	248
XX	Gloria Mundi	254
XXI	The Spring	258
XXII	The First Love	263
XXIII	Seeing the Old Town	270
XXIV	Pulvis et Umbra	278
XXV	Shadows	287
XXVI	The Great Redemption	293
XXVII	Sursum Corda	298
XXVIII	Hope	302
XXIX	Ideal	305
XXX	Little Mother	308
XXXI	Love	311
XXXII	Epigrams and Aphorisms	317
XXXIII	Scrip for Your Pilgrimage	324
XXXIV	Song of the Rain	330
	L'Envoi	332

AN ATTIC DREAMER

I

IN THE ATTIC

[*By Way of Prologue*]

IN old days, in merrie England, the chapman or pamphleteer set up shop in an attic, as much for economy's sake as to be out of easy reach of the police. Commonly he bit the thumb at Government, and the bilks were his natural foes. Great men out of place lent him secret support and countenance, paying the costs of his perilous trade and supplying him with matter for his broadsides. His fidelity to his patrons was his best virtue; in other respects of conduct he was, it is to be feared, no better than he should have been. But the life was one of constant adventure, and as such appealed to many daring spirits. Often they had to move, and quickly, too, yet they were not always quick enough for the emissaries of Government. To stand in the pillory and there submit to the nameless outrages of the London mob; to spend long years in jails fouler than a modern sewer;

to be whipped and branded by the sovereign majesty of the law; to be hunted from one rookery to another—such was the lot of many a bold pamphleteer of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries.

Ah well, my lads, they had a stirring time of it, for all their hard lines, and potently, though obscurely, they made themselves felt on public opinion, which, as hath been said, is but history in the making. Peace to them!—they and their types, their plotting and pamphleteering, their ballads and broadsides, have long since vanished from the scene; but some echo of their ancient hardihood, some smack of real service to the good old cause of liberty, which to render they so bravely risked life and limb,—still linger in the world.

I therefore feel that in publishing *The Papyrus* from an attic I am in accord with some worthy literary traditions. To be sure, it's a very nice attic and roomy enough—well lighted, too, with walls and ceiling finished off and calcimined. Strictly speaking, *The Papyrus* occupies only half the attic; the other half, which by a lucky chance is quite separate and partitioned off, the younger children use for a playhouse on rainy days. Oh, and I had al-

most forgotten, the family linen is sometimes dried here, with great convenience.

Allah is both wise and good. He sometimes puts it into the stony heart of a landlord (Jersey landlord at that) to make unwitting provision for the Children of the Dream.

The stairway leading to both attics is quite dark, and it turns sharply, but we don't feel that to be a great objection, as the Youngest is now walking and only swarms when he is going down stairs—which he does backward and with remarkable celerity.

Once a month the children have great fun carrying the little brown booklets from the lower floor, where the printer delivers them, to the attic; and again from the attic to the lower floor, when ready to be mailed. That is, *they* think it's great fun—and surely a large family is not without its compensations.

The Papyrus, by the way, is just the age of our Youngest but One, a five-year-old girl. I am not sure of which I am the fonder, but the Mother, with a touch of artistic jealousy, says *she* is . . .

I love this little attic room. Here I spend the only quiet hours that I may really call mine.

Here, with the world and its taskmasters shut out, I cheat myself with a dream of independence—ah, an uneasy dream at best, and a fleeting one, but yet it links day unto day with a thread of gold. The good thoughts that come only with silence—peace without and within—have here their dwelling place. Here, too, I listen oft to a Voice which speaks of the sure, though late, reward that waits on unyielding effort, on hope that springs anew from each defeat, on faith in self that can stand against the world, on fidelity to the Dream!

Yes, even though knowing myself unworthy of the high call it would lay upon me, I do hearken to that Voice—aye, and often sigh that I may not rise to those heights of heroism to which it points me.

O little attic room, that has shared the secret of my dearest cherished hopes, that has known and ever knows something not all unworthy in me which to express is at once my joy and my despair,—who shall sit here in days to come when I am gone? Pray God it be one who may think not unkindly of him that dreamed his dreams here for a space, and was, in his fashion, happy within your quiet walls. . . .

More commonly, however, I think of my

literary predecessors, the old English chapmen and pamphleteers in *their* attics, and how the wind of time has long since blown them and their works away.

And I smile to myself, once more put off beginning my Masterpiece . . . well, till to-morrow; turn down the light, and go softly to bed.

II

THE POE LEGEND

[*An Unconventional Version*]

A COMPLIMENT which mediocrity often pays to genius, is to indict it.

So there is an indictment against Edgar Allan Poe, with a bill of particulars, the effect of which is to make him out the chief Horrible Example of our literary history.

Most of his critics admit that he was a genius and deny that he was a respectable person.

A considerable number deny his respectability with warmth, and coldly concede to him a certain measure of poetical talent.

A few embittered ones deny that he was either respectable or a genius.

No one has ever contended for him that he was both a genius and respectable. I do not make this claim, as I should not wish to appear too original; and, besides, I am content with

the fact of his genius, and care nothing for the question of respectability. Or, yes, I do care something for it, if by respectability is meant that prudent regard for self which would have prevented the suicide of Poe. I'm sure if he were living to-day, he would never think of drinking himself to death. His work would be better paid, for one thing,—supposing that he could get past the magazine editors,—and then we have learned a little how to drink—the art was crude and brutal in Poe's day. Perhaps this is the only respect in which we, the children of a later generation, are better artists than he.

It is true that some eminent living poets are quite successful in keeping sober, and they are even more successful in writing poetry which is not so good as Poe's!

In brief, conventionality bids fair to kill off the poet and place him at no distant date in the category of extinct species.

True poetry is something awful, mysterious, as beautiful and terrible as the lightning's leap in the collied heaven, charming the eye with dread and rousing the soul to a quick sense of the Power behind the mechanism of nature! Now it is difficult to associate this idea with a

type of poet that offers no food for wonder and leaves us no ground for illusions.

No doubt many a respectable poet would pitch the proprieties to Hell, if he could be sure that by so doing he would land beside Villon and Burns and Byron and Poe. But that is a large "if", and in our day it is almost as hard to live the old life of the poet as to recapture his careless lyric rapture and the secret of his wild genius.

Indeed, if we may believe the Philistines of the hour, the personality of the poet is no longer much in question; seeing that he is reduced or, if you please, elevated to a perfectly respectable type; offers no shocking singularities of character or conduct; is often arrayed as the lilies and bidden to discourse platitudes before young ladies' seminaries; and has modest hopes of being one day decorated as a *Doctor Litterarum.*

But look you, there are some amongst us who will fight until their eyelids can no longer wag, against this caricature of the Poet. Human nature, too, is opposed to it, and the heresy is not written in the Holy Book of Genius. I do not contend that literature must be a species

of Newgate Calendar,* a history of tragedies, errors and defeats:—that were to overdarken the picture. But I shall venture to hold suspect the man who comes smiling and sleek and prosperous before me, in the awful name of Poet; with no signs upon him of agony and wrestling, and no visible wounds from the embraces of his God.

II

THE tradition of Poe's drunkenness, or to speak scientifically, dipsomania, hangs on so persistently that many people can think of him only in connection with that still unforgotten melodrama, "Ten Nights in a Barroom". As a boy I used to fancy that he was cut out for the leading part in it. And in fact I saw a play not long ago—in the provinces, of course—in which the author of "The Raven" was shown drunk in every act and working up to a brilliant climax of the "horrors". . . .

When I try to summon before my mind's eye the figure of Poe, the man in his habit as he lived, his daily walks and associates, the picture is at once broken up by an irruption of red and

* This was Carlyle's notion and phrase.

angry faces—old John Allan, Burton the Comedian (who could be so tragically in earnest, and so damned virtuous with a poor poet), White, Griswold, Wilmer, Graham, Briggs, the sweet singer of "Ben Bolt", and others of the queer literati of that day. Each and all declare in staccato, with positive forefinger raised, *"We tell you the man was drunk!"* Then Absalom Willis appears, bowing daintily, and says in mild deprecation, "No, I would not precisely say drunk—but do me the honor to read my article on the subject in the 'Home Journal'." The saintly Longfellow, evoked from the shades, seems to add, "Not merely drunk, but malignant". And a host of forgotten poetasters looming dimly in the background, take up the Psalmist's words and make a refrain of them—"Not merely drunk, but malignant!"

Since this is what we get, in lieu of biography, by those who have taken the life of Poe, it is no wonder that the obscure dramatist seizes on the same stuff for his purpose, degrading the most famous of our poets to the level of a barroom hero. Whether or not it is possible at this late day to separate the fame of Poe from the foul legend of drunkenness and sodden dissipation that has gathered about

it, I would not venture to say; but very sure am I that no one has yet attempted the feat. Even the mild and half-apologetic Dr. Woodberry is gravely interested in the number, extent and variety of Poe's drunks. Let me not forget one honorable exception, Edmund Clarence Stedman, who has taken his brother poet, "as he was and for what he was". I do not, however, include Mr. Stedman with the biographers of Poe—he stands rather at the head of those who have sought to interpret his genius and to safeguard his literary legacy. And though (I think) he brought no great love to the task—Poe is hardly a subject to inspire love—he has done it fairly and well.

I may here observe, parenthetically, that in a very kind letter addressed to the author, Mr. Stedman demurs at the suggestion that he brought no great love to his critical labors in behalf of Poe—labors that have unquestionably raised the poet's literary status in the view of many, and have as certainly cleared away a mass of prejudice, evil report and misunderstanding attached to his personal character and reputation. But all I mean to convey is, that Mr. Stedman's splendid work was done, as it appears to me, less for the love of Poe than

for the love of letters. In saying this I imply not the slightest reproach: Poe is a man to be pitied, praised, admired, regretted; or, if you please, to be hated, envied, blamed, and condemned. But love—such love, say, as Lamb inspired in his friends and still inspires in his readers—is not for the lonely singer of "Israfel".

I agree with Poe's biographers that he got drunk often, but I am only sorry that he never got any fun out of it—the man was essentially unhumorous. I should be glad to hold a brief for Poe's drunkenness, if his tippling ever yielded him any solace; or, better still, if it ever inspired him to any genuine literary effort. We know well that some great poets have successfully wooed the Muse in their cups, but you can take my word for it, they were cold sober when they worked the thing out. It is true Emerson says (after Milton) that the poet who is to see visions of the gods should drink only water out of a wooden bowl; but Emerson belonged to the unjoyous race of New England Brahmins, who were surprisingly like the snow-men children make, in that they lacked natural heat and rude passions. We may not forget that a poet who stands for all time as an ideal type of

sanity and genius—the always contemporary Quintus Horatius Flaccus—has in many places guaranteed mediocrity to the abstaining bard.*

So there was the best poetical warrant for Poe's drinking, if he could only have got any good out of it. But he couldn't and didn't; he was merely, at times frequent enough to justify his enemies, an ordinary dipsomaniac, craving the madness of alcohol; mirthless, darkly sullen, quite insane, though perhaps physically harmless; hardly conscious of his own identity. Of the genial god Bacchus, who rewards his true devotees with jollity and mirth, with forgetfulness of care and the golden promise of fortune, who makes poets of dull men and gods of poets—of this splendid and beneficent deity, Poe knew nothing. That spell from which Horace drew his most charming visions; which inspired Burns with courage to sing amid the hopeless poverty of his lot; which kindled the genius of Byron and allured the fancy of Heine, like his own Lorelei; which is three-fourths of Béranger and one-half of Moore—to Poe

* I need only cite the famous lines—
—nec vivere carmina possunt
Quæ scribuntur aquæ potoribus.
Which may be rudely Englished—
O water-drinking bards, how brief the date
Your laurels flourish, tho' so "dry" your state!

meant only madness, the sordid kind from which men turn away with horror and disgust, and which too often leads to the clinic and the potter's field. The kindly spirit of wine, that for a brief time at least works an inspiring change in every man, enlarging the sympathies, softening the heart, prompting new and generous impulses, opening the soul shut up to self to the greater claims and interests of humanity, was, in the case of Poe, turned into a malefic genie, intent only upon the lowest forms of animal gratification, and reckless of any and every ill wrought to body and soul.

In other words—for I must not write a conventional essay—Poe was the kind of man that never should have touched the cup. For there are some men—oh, yes, I know it!—to whom the mildest wine ever distilled from grapes kissed by the sun in laughing valleys, is deadly poison, fatal as that draught brewed of old by the Colchian enchantress. And of these was poor Edgar Poe.

Neither were there for him those negative but still pleasing virtues which are sometimes credited to a worshiper of the great god Bacchus—perhaps they are mostly fictitious, but this is a fraud at which Virtue herself may con-

nive. I am very sure no one ever called Poe a "good fellow" for all the whiskey he drank; and his biographers also make the same omission. The drunkenness of Burns calls up the laughing genius of a hundred matchless ballads, the dance, the fair, and the hot love that followed close upon; calls up the epic riot of beggars in the alehouse of Poosie Nancy—and we see the whole vivid life of Burns was of a piece with his poetry. To wish him less drunken or more sober (if you prefer it) is to wish him less a poet.

Not so with Poe, as I have already shown. He got nothing from drink, in the way of literary inspiration, though some of his critics think he did, and, being themselves both sober and dull, appear to doubt whether anything so gotten is legitimate. I hate to lay irreverent hands on the popular belief that "The Raven" was composed during or just following a crisis of drunken delirium—the poem is too elaborately artificial for that,—and has not Poe told us how he wrote it, in a confession which, more clearly than all the labored disparagement of his biographers, explains the vanity, the weakness and the fatal lack of humor in his make-up? I do not find any suggestions of

drink or "dope" in the samples of his prose which I dislike, such as a few of his "Old World Romances". If there be any "dope" in this stuff, it is, in my opinion, the natural dope of faculties when driven against their will to attempt things beyond the writer's province or power. And there is also the "dope" of what could be, at times, a fearfully bad style. But I am not writing a literary essay.

I conclude, then, that in the case of Edgar Allan Poe, drink has no extenuating circumstances, though many might be pleaded for the poet himself. It made enemies for him of those who wanted to be his friends (if you will only believe them); it lost him his money—deuced little of it ever he had; it helped to break his health, and it gave him no valuable literary inspiration. Some solace, I would gladly think, it yielded him, and mayhap (who knows?) there was a blessed nepenthe in the peace it brought him at last when, after babbling a while on his cot in that Baltimore hospital, there came to him the only dreamless sleep he ever knew.

III

ALL his life long Poe dreamed of having a magazine of his own, and never got his desire. He was always writing to his friends and possible patrons about this one darling dream; but nothing came of it. The nearest he ever got to his wish was when he succeeded in drawing into his plan one T. C. Clarke, a Philadelphia publisher. Clarke had money, and he put up a certain amount toward the starting of the "Penn", as the magazine was to be called. Some initial steps were taken, and the moment seems to have been the most sanguine in Poe's long battle with adversity. He was full of enthusiasm and wrote to many friends, detailing his literary hopes and projects in connection with the new magazine. Then suddenly, and rather unaccountably, everything was dropped. It seems likely that Clarke took cold in his money—at any rate, the "Penn" died a-borning. Poe had gone far enough to incur a large-sized debt to Clarke:—he left in the latter's hand a manuscript as security, which, we may suppose, did not raise the temperature of that gentleman's finances.

Then the planning and the letter-writing and

the making of prospectuses, with other architectural projects of the Spanish variety, went on and continued to the end of the chapter—good God! how pathetic and yet how grimly humorous it all is to one who has carried the same cross, and knows every inch of that Calvary! Poe was at least spared the struggle which comes after possession; but I am aware that this is no consolation to the man who is dying to make his fight.

Yet once again the chance fluttered into his hands, when he bought the "Broadway Journal" from a man named Bisco with a note of fifty dollars endorsed by Horace Greeley. Not long afterward Horace had the pleasure of paying the note, and he remained to the end a strong believer in Poe's imaginative gifts. About the same time that the philosopher parted with his money, Poe gave up his brief possession of the "Journal". But still he went on in the old hopeless, hopeful way, dreaming of that blessed magazine, which he had now decided to call the "Stylus" instead of the "Penn". And a name only it remained to the last.

From these and many similar facts in the life of Poe his biographers to a man conclude that

he had no business ability. I am not so sure—I am only sure that he never had the money. In fact, Poe was never able to raise more than one hundred dollars at any one time in his whole life—once when he borrowed that sum to get married (and the sneerers say, forgot to repay it), and again when he won a like amount with a prize story. Yes, he got a judgment of something over two hundred dollars against his savage foe, Thomas Dunn English,* but I am not aware that it was ever satisfied—think of Poe suing a man for literary libel! His usual salary was ten dollars a week—Burton, the tragic Comedian, held out a promise of more, but discharged him when the time to make good came around—and this after Poe had gained what was considered a literary reputation in those days. With such resources, to have started the kind of magazine Poe had always in mind, would have tasked a man of great business ability, with no poetical ideas floating about in his head to divert him from the Main Chance.

Certainly Poe was not the man for the job—

* A mediocre and prolific poet of whose works scarcely anything is now remembered or reprinted, save the once popular ballad, "Ben Bolt", which owes its later recrudescence to "Trilby".

I doubt if he could have sold shares in El Dorado. But I do not think his failures, such as they were, justly convict him of a complete lack of that ordinary sense which enables a man to carry his money as far as the corner. There is a popular cant now, based on the success of some fortunate writers, that literary genius of high order is not inconsistent with first-rate business ability. I do not care to go into the discussion—especially as this is not a literary essay—but I will say that in most instances cited to prove the point, the money sense is a good deal more obvious than the literary genius.

To make what is called a business success in this world, a man is required to do homage unto many gods. But though he pay the most devoted worship to the divinities of Thrift, Enterprise, Courage, Energy, Foresight, Calculation, he will still fail should he omit his tribute to a greater god than these—Expediency!

In his poetical way Edgar Allan Poe went a-questing after many strange worships, and he was learned in all that mystic lore as far back as the Chaldeans. But he seems never to have got an inkling of that one Universal Religion

in which all men believe, which settles all earthly things—the inexorable Divinity of Affairs, already named, by which success or failure is determined for every man that cometh into the world.

IV

TOWARD the close of Poe's life a horde of female poets rushed upon his trail. His relations with them were not wholly "free from blame", to quote his biographers—they seem to have been, at any rate, Platonic. Indeed, the fact is self-evident. A poetess who is always studying her own emotions for "copy", is not to be taken unawares. I think Poe was in more danger of being led astray than any of the ladies whom he distinguished with his attentions. It is to be noted that they invariably speak of him as a "perfect gentleman", even after he has ceased to honor them with his affections. To me there is something rather literary than womanly in such angelic charity and forgiveness—'tis too sugary sweet. Have we not heard that lovers estranged make the bitterest enemies? At any rate, the lover of "Ligeia", "Eleonora" and similar abstractions

was not a man to be feared by a poetess of well-seasoned virtue.

Yes, I am sure they only wanted to get copy out of him, and especially to link their names with his. They were mostly widows, too—which makes the thing even more suspicious. One of them—that one to whom he addressed his finest lyric—was forty-five. Lord, Lord! what liars these poets are! I give you my word that until very lately, I believed those perfect lines "To Helen" idealized some youthful love of Poe's.

> Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
> Are holy land.

Psyche lived in Providence, which is in the State of Rhode Island. She was, as I have said, forty-five, an age that should be above tempting or temptation. She wrote verses, now forgotten, and her passion for Poe was of the most literary character. After a two-days' courtship he proposed to her and was accepted, on condition, however, that he amend his breath —which is to say, his habits. Poe seems to have regretted his rashness, for he at once started on a bat (these remarks are not literary), as if the prospect of his joy were too

much for him. Still Helen would not reject him; she merely wrote him more poetry—and the poet again turned to drink as if to drown a great sorrow. A day was set for the wedding, and he began celebrating at the hotel bar long before the hour appointed for the ceremony. Helen heard of his early start, and, knowing what he could do in a long day with such an advantage, she sent for him and broke off the engagement. This is the only instance I know of in Poe's entire career where his drinking had the least appearance of sanity.

Before this, and indeed during the lifetime of Mrs. Poe, he had broken with Mrs. Ellet, a lady who made feeble verse, but whose ability for scandal and mischief was out of the ordinary. It was through this daughter of the Muses that the poet became estranged from Mrs. Osgood, and there was a beautiful women's row, in which Margaret Fuller took a hand. Mrs. Osgood was a gushing person, ferociously intent on "copy", but of mature age and quite capable of taking care of herself. She declares and asseverates that Poe chased her to Providence—that fatal Providence!—likewise to Albany, imploring her to love him. I wonder where he got the money for these

journeys—about this time he was lecturing on the "Cosmogony of the Universe", in order to raise funds for his eternally projected magazine. The very popular nature of the subject and his own qualities as a lyceum entertainer,—which never would have commended him to the late Major Pond—incline me to the belief that Poe was not at that time burning much money in trips to Providence and Albany.

At any rate, Mrs. Osgood cut him out, though on her deathbed, with a last effort of the ruling passion (or literary motive) she very handsomely forgave him and pronounced a touching eulogy on his moral character.

Then there was "Annie", a married woman living near Boston, to whom Poe addressed a sincere and beautiful poem. The exigencies of her case rather strain the Platonic theory, but I do not give up my brief, mind you. I suspect that Annie was behind the breaking off with Helen; but, of course, he couldn't marry Annie for the reason that she had a husband already (of whom we know no more), and divorces were not then negotiated in record time. Annie was therefore obliged to be content with the sweet satisfaction of foiling a hated rival—and to a woman's heart, we know this is the next

best thing to landing the man. Annie, by the way, was not a literary person; she wanted love from Poe, not copy; and she seems to have sincerely, if not very sensibly, loved the poet for himself.

Remains the last of these queer attachments which throw a kind of grotesque romance over the closing years of Poe. Mrs. Shelton was of unimpeached maturity, like the rest, and like all the rest but one, a widow. She lived in Richmond, Virginia, and she had been a boyish flame of Poe's. Mrs. Shelton was neither beautiful nor literary, and she had attained the ripe age of fifty years. But she was rich, and though Poe was not a business man, I dare say he felt the money would be no great inconvenience—and then there was always the magazine to be started, dear me! Still he made love to her as if half afraid she would take him at his word—and he kept writing to Annie! But Mrs. Shelton was of sterner stuff than the poetic Helen. She had made up her mind to marry Poe for reasons sufficient unto herself, and she would have done it had not fate intervened. She made her preparations like a thorough business woman, and strong-mindedly led the way toward the altar. The wedding ring was

bought (I can hardly believe with Poe's money), and all things were in readiness for the happy event, when the poet wandered away on that luckless journey whose end was in another world.

Mrs. Shelton wore mourning for him, and all her women friends told her it was wonderfully becoming. . . . I think Annie's crape was at the heart.

Edgar Allan Poe was a child in the hands of women, and that's the whole truth—a loving, weak, vain and irresponsible child. This count in the indictment is the weakest of all. I should not have referred to it were this a conventional "study" of the Poet.

V

THE notion that Poe was mad has within late years received a quasi-scientific confirmation—at least the doctors have settled the matter to their own satisfaction. I therefore advert to it in order to dispose of the Poe indictment in full.

My learned friend, Dr. William Lee Howard, of Baltimore (a town forever memorable to the lovers of the poet), sets out to prove that Edgar Allan Poe was not a drunkard in the

ordinary sense (which is ordinarily believed), but was rather what the medical experts are now calling a psychopath; in plain words, a madman. "He belongs," says the doctor, "to that class of psychopaths too long blamed and accused of vicious habits that are really symptoms of disease—a disease now recognized by neurologists as psychic epilepsy." The doctor fortifies his thesis with much learning of the same portentous kind, and in conclusion he says:

"The psychologist readily understands the reason for Poe's intensity, for his cosmic terror and his constant dwelling upon the aspects of physical decay. He lived alternately a life of obsession and lucidity, and this duality is the explanation of his being so shamefully misunderstood—so highly praised, so cruelly blamed. In most of his weird and fantastic tales we can see the patient emerging from oblivion. We find in his case many of the primary symptoms of the psychopath—a disordered and disturbed comprehension of concepts, suspicion, and exaggerated ideas of persecution."

These be words horrendous and mouth-filling, but surely I need not remind the erudite Dr. Howard that—

When Bishop Berkeley said there was no matter,
And proved it—'twas no matter what he said.

And I suspect Dr. Howard in coming, as he thinks, to the defence of Poe's reputation, has done the poet an ill service, though I doubt if he will influence any right-judging minds. Nor am I in sympathy with the doctor's ingenious argument that the most strongly marked products of Poe's genius are to be referred to a diseased mental and nervous condition; which is simply Nordau's contention that all genius is disease. According to this view, all men of great intellectual power —*e. g.,* Nordau himself and Dr. William Lee Howard—are insane; and yet it is a fact that the madhouses are chiefly peopled with the average sort of human beings.

No, the first of American poets was not mad because he wrote "The Raven", and "The House of Usher", and "Ligeia", and "The Red Death". These masterpieces indeed prove that he was at certain fortunate times in possession of that highest and most potential sanity, that *mens divinior,* from which true artistic creation

results—always the rarest and most beautiful phenomenon in the world.

Mad? I guess not! but no doubt he was thought to be cracked by the half of his acquaintance, for such is the tribute that mediocrity ever pays to genius. The small grocer folk and their kind about Fordham, as well as some more pretentious respectabilities, looked askance at the poor poet struggling with his burden and his vision; fighting his unequal battle with fate and fortune. In much the same way, with a scarcely veiled contempt and aversion, he was regarded by the successful literary cliques of the day, especially the "New England School" of his detestation—to which it must be allowed he offered provocation enough by his critical disparagements.* It is to be noted that Mr. W. D. Howells, the leading inheritor of their tradition, though a critic of unusual breadth and sympathy, has a poor notion of Poe. In short, our poet was that scandal and contradiction in his own day—a true genius; and he remains an enigma to ours.

But I do not think he was any more a psychopath or a madman than—bless me!—Dr. William Lee Howard himself—though I will grant

* Emerson called him the "jingle man".

that, as we are now saying, several things got constantly on his nerves. And among these:

Chronic poverty.
Rejection of his literary claims.
Success of his inferiors.
The insolence of publishers.
Humiliation of spirit.

And—I must grant it—the agony induced by his occasional excesses and his forfeiture of self-respect.

I do not argue that the misfortunes prove the genius, even though in Poe's case they seem to have been the penalty annexed to his extraordinary gifts—the curse of the malignant Fairy. But with due respect to the learned authority several times referred to, and in spite of all the Bedlam science in the world, I hold to my faith that true genius is not the negation, but the affirmation of sanity.

As for the literary smugs, to whom Poe is still anathema because he *was* a genius and also a scandal, according to their moral code: is it not enough, gentlemen, that you are prosperous, and respectable—and utterly unlike Poe?

VI

NEXT to the subject of Poe's drinking habits, which you have to follow like a strong breath through every account of him that I have seen—his faithful biographers give most attention to his borrowings. Hence the typical Poe biography reads, as I have already suggested, like an indictment.

Now, the fact is, poor Poe was as bad a borrower as he was a drinker—he meant well, and heaven knows he tried hard enough in each capacity, but neither part fitted him, and in both he failed to rise to the dignity of the artist. He was truly a bum borrower (this is not a literary essay). He never executed a "touch" with grace or finesse. Instead of going to his friends with endearing assurance, smiling like a May-day at the honor and pleasure he designed them, he put on his hat with the deep black band and went like an undertaker to conduct his own funeral. No wonder they threw him down! But in truth he rarely had the courage to face his man, and so he sent the poor devoted Mrs. Clemm—that paragon of mothers-in-law for a poet!—or else weakly relied on his powers of literary persuasion and courted

certain refusal by penning his modest request. Call this man a borrower! Why, he was a parody of Charles Lamb's idea that your true borrower—like Alcibiades or Brinsley Sheridan—belongs to a superior kind of humanity, the Great Race—born to rule the rest. He never realized the greatness of the Borrowing Profession—never rose to it, to take a metaphor from the stage, but remained a mumping, fearful, calamity-inviting, graceless and hopeless, make-believe borrower to the last.

For this his biographers are ashamed of him, as for his sprees, and this also has passed into the popular legend concerning Poe, of which the obscure dramatist (already referred to) has availed himself. Neither the unknown dramatist nor his biographers have deemed it worth while to explain this phase of Poe's life —these are the facts and here are the letters to Kennedy, Griswold, White, Thomas, Graham, Clarke, Simms, Willis, *et al.* Can you make anything else of them? And another count of the indictment *in re* Edgar Allan Poe is proven.

I am not writing a literary essay, but I must again lay stress on one thing, in extenuation of Poe's inveterate offence of borrowing from his

friends—he did it very badly, so badly that this fact alone should excuse him in the eyes of the charitable. Let us also try to bear in mind that the most he could earn, after giving oath-bound guarantees as to sobriety, etc., was Ten Dollars a week—this was the sum for which Burton (the tragic comedian) hired him, and from which in a very short time the same Burton ruthlessly separated him. The joke being that this same fat-headed Burton carried on the affair with a high show of regard for the dignity of the Literary Profession, outraged by Poe! Ten dollars a week! Why, do you know that our most popular author, Mr. Success G. Smith, is believed to earn about fifty thousand a year by his pen? That Mr. Calcium Givemfitts, the fearless exposer of corruption in high places, is worrying along on a beggarly stipend of, say, thirty-five thousand? That the famous society novelist, Mrs. Tuxedo Smith-Jones, barely contrives to make ends meet on the same hard terms; and that a score of others might be named whose incomes do not fall below twenty-five thousand? . . .

But, you say, does each and every one of these gifted and fortunate individuals make literature in the sense that Poe made it? My

dear sir, these persons are all my intimate friends; I admire their works next to my own, though I confess I do not read them so often. Therefore, to single out one of these distinguished and successful authors for praise would be invidious; and, besides—I am not writing a literary essay.

VII

THAT old, old story of genius struggling with want, and overborne by cruel necessity, hampered too by its weaknesses, how pitiful though trite it is! The other day I went into the great Public Library of New York, in order to verify some data for this paper. Under the glass cases displaying rare books and autograph letters, I saw one or two exhibits which quite made me forget the object of my visit. I looked at them a long time, and I would like you to understand and share the feeling which they evoked in me.

There was, first of all, a copy of the First Edition of Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Man That Was Used Up", published by Graham of Philadelphia; a thin book, or rather pamphlet, in gray covers. An

inscription stated that it was a very rare copy, only one other of this edition being known to exist, and that it had brought at auction in 1909, the sum of thirty-eight hundred dollars; the highest price yet paid for any book printed in America. Thirty-eight hundred dollars!—an amount that would have seemed a fortune to Poe and would have secured to his later years the independence of which he vainly dreamed to the last—perhaps added to his days and enabled him to leave us a richer literary legacy. And why was this great sum paid recently for a cheap paper-covered book printed away back in 1843, seeing that we possess the stories in numerous better editions? Why but because the rich collector prized and coveted that book for its rarity as one of the indubitable proofs of Poe's pilgrimage—let me say without irreverence, a thorn from his crown, a stone from his Calvary. Nay, has not the world, in various ways, always paid the highest price for the relics of the martyr? How else shall we surely know the elect ones who suffered and travailed in order that their great thoughts might be born?

I turned from this to an autograph letter of one of the most famous and unfortunate of

poets, whose destiny is not without tragic likeness to that of Poe. It bore date March 31, 1788, and read in part as follows:

"I am so harassed with care and anxiety about this farming project of mine that my Muse has degenerated into the veriest prose wench that ever picked cinders or followed a tinker. . . . At present the world sits such a load on my mind that it has effaced almost every trace of the image of God in me."

The letter is signed Robert Burns.

In the same case I saw a letter of Poe's, addressed to one E. A. Duycinck, Esq., and bearing date November 13, 1845. It ran as follows:

"My dear Mr. Duycinck:

I am still dreadfully unwell and fear I shall be very seriously ill. I have resolved to give up the 'Broadway Journal' and retire to the country for six months or perhaps a year, as the sole means of regaining my health and spirits. Is it not possible that yourself, or Mr. Mathews, might give me a trifle for my interest in the paper? Or if this cannot be effected, might I venture to ask you for an advance of $50 on the faith of the American Parnassus, which I will finish as soon as possible? If you would oblige me in this manner, I would feel myself under the deepest obligation."

The writer ends by requesting that reply be sent by bearer—another proof of Poe's deficiency in the borrowing craft, since only a novice or a bungler would thus attempt to force a man's hand. Loans are very shy toward those who seem to need them so badly.

This letter so strangely companioning that of Burns, which it resembles in its burden of complaint and the cry of despair it voices, is stated to be from the Duycinck collection. I am inclined to suspect that the requested fifty was never added to the Poe collection.

By the way, there was another letter in the case, from a great and famous and successful contemporary of Poe, whose ordered and happy life was in every respect a contrast to his. I wonder why, under the circumstances, it gave me no thrill to read those lines penned by the hand of Longfellow:—verily unto him that hath shall not always be given!

VIII

A LAST word as to Poe's enemies—those whom he made for himself and those who were called into being by his literary triumphs. Here again I think Poe failed to hit it

off, as he might have done. Though he labored at the gentle art of making enemies with much diligence, he never utilized them with brilliant success in a literary way (most of the criticism which procured him his enemies is hack-writing, not literature). For example, he did not make his enemies serve both his wit and reputation, as Heine so well knew how to do. The latter turned his foes into copy; throughout his life they were his chief literary asset, and I have no doubt that he almost loved them for the literature they enabled him to make. This is the most exquisite revenge upon a literary rival—to make him your pot-boiler and bread-winner as well as a feeder to your fame and glory. It was beyond Poe, and, therefore, the chronicle of his grudges has for us hardly more piquancy than the tale of his borrowings.

But his biographers weary us with it, as if the matter were of real importance. Nonsense! Our literary manners are doubtless improved since Poe's day; the brethren are surely not so hungry, and there is more fodder to go round (I have said this is not a literary effort). Still the civility is rather assumed than real; there is much spiteful kicking of shins under the table; and private lampoons take the place of

the old public personalities. I grant that authors are more generous in their attitude toward one another than formerly, and the fact cannot be disputed that they are fervently sincere in their praise of—the dead ones!

No, we shall not condemn Poe for the enemies he made. The printed word breeds hostility and aversion that the writer wots not of —yea, his dearest friends, scanning his page with jealous eye, shall take rancor from his most guileless words and cherish it in their bosoms against him. Write, and your friends will love you till they hate you; for there is no fear and jealousy in the world like those that lurk in the printed word. Write then, write deeply enough, down to the truth of your own soul, below the shams of phrase and convention, below your insincerities of self—and you shall have enemies to your heart's desire. The man who could print much and still make no enemies,* has never yet appeared on this planet.

* One W. C. Brownell, writing in "Scribner's Magazine," evinces a kind of rage that a man so weak, so faulty and ill-governed, an artist so capricious, slight and motiveless, should have wrought himself into the unforgetting heart of humanity. Whatever may be the explanation, we know that is the offence which a certain brand of critics will never forgive Poe. Drunken, debauched and devil-driven, perhaps the man often was; but the rare Poet whom the world will ever cherish was brother to Israfel, and not less divine.

Certainly it was not he who struggled desperately for the poorest living in and about New York some seventy-odd years ago; who saw his young wife die in want and misery, with the horror of officious charity at the door; who not long afterwards, and in a kindly dream (as I must think it) left all this coil of trouble and sorrow behind him, bequeathing to immortality the fame of Edgar Allan Poe.

III

IN RE COLONEL INGERSOLL *

IN many States of the Union there are laws on the statute books that penalize liberty of thought and speech.

These laws are mostly derived from Colonial times and the barbarous intolerance of the Old World. They are an organic link between us and the British tyranny from which our patriot fathers appealed to the sword. No statesman or legislator has the courage to demand that they be repealed or annulled. It is supposed that the moral sense of the people is somehow concerned in their being kept alive—or at least in a state of suspended animation and potential menace.

* In this paper I treat Ingersoll romantically (as in keeping with the spirit of my book), as a personality and a man of literary as well as oratorical gifts, certainly an American Notable—if we have ever produced one.

I dare not slight his peculiar religious views, but I have touched the polemic side lightly and mainly to the end of bringing into relief the Man of Genius and the Humanitarian. Surely it is hardly warrantable to speak or think of the Colonel as a spent influence; his books sell always, his charm as a Personality, as an Orator and a Writer is saving him in spite of his—I grant—unpopular agnosticism. The great glowing heart of the man redeems his cold infidelity.

So these cruel old laws are not disturbed by pious legislators, who would make no bones at all of trading in public franchises, or of acting on any proposition with the "immoral majority". Hypocrisy and fraud respect in these ancient statutes the "wisdom" of our ancestors, and still affect to see in them a safeguard for religion. Hypocrisy and fraud unite to keep them on the law-books where they lie, asleep it may be, but ready-fanged and poisoned should they be evoked at any time to do their ancient office. Many people would be glad to have these infamous laws erased from the statute-books, but they do nothing about it. The public sense of hypocrisy stands in the way. Legislators fear the protest of what is called "organized religion". Liberty continues to be disgraced in the house of her friends.

New Jersey has laws of this kind. Something over three decades ago one of them was waked from its long sleep in order to punish a man who had exercised the right of free speech. By a strange contradiction—the result of yoking the Era of Liberty with the Age of Oppression—this right of free speech is guaranteed in the Constitution of New Jersey, under which the old cruel Colonial law is allowed to operate.

That is to say, the Constitution both guarantees and penalizes the same privilege—a beautiful example of consistency arising from respect for the "wisdom of our ancestors".

The trial attracted universal attention because the bravest and ablest advocate of free speech in our time appeared for the defence. Outside of the great principle involved, there was little in the case to engage the interest or sympathies of Colonel Ingersoll. The defendant was an obscure ex-minister named Reynolds, who had gone over to infidelity. Religion, it must be granted, lost less than Reynolds, who seems to have been unable to maintain himself as a preacher of liberal doctrine. No doubt many ministers have profited by his example and stayed where they were—the free thought standard of ability is perhaps not much lower than the evangelical. This Reynolds printed and circulated some literature about the Bible. It was merely puerile and foolish, but some people who looked upon Reynolds as a nuisance (which I fear he was) and wanted to punish him, thought it a good case for the old Colonial statute against blasphemy. Accordingly they invoked it, and hence the trial.

The result of this now famous trial for blas-

phemy proves that a law on the statute-book, no matter how antiquated, bigoted and absurd —and this was all three in the superlative degree—outweighs with a jury the utmost logic and eloquence of the ablest advocate. Such is the superstition of law, and such is our enlightened wisdom in jealously preserving these bequests from the blind and tyrannous bigotry of the Old World.

We need not condemn the twelve Jersey jurymen for sinning against light—darkness was there in the law and demanded judgment at their hands. Of course, they enjoyed the Colonel's eloquence; his marvellous pleading; his logic that built up and buttressed a whole structure of argument, while his oratory ravished them; his flashes of wit that disarmed every prejudice; his persuasive power that almost convinced them they were free men with no slightest obligation to the servile past. Yes, it must have been like a wonderful play to these simple Jerseymen. No doubt they congratulated themselves that they were privileged spectators, seeing and hearing it for nothing; and they talked or will talk of it to their dying day. I think myself it was one of the most effective and powerful addresses ever made to a

jury—one of the finest appeals ever uttered in behalf of liberty—and it will be honored as it deserves when this Nation shall be truly free.

I daresay some of these Jerseymen were wavering when the Colonel sat down at last—how could they help it? But the prosecutor reminded them (without any eloquence) of their obligations to city, county and State. Above all, there is the Law—what are you going to do about that, gentlemen? No matter whether it was passed some two hundred years ago and carried over from Oppression to Liberty—no matter whether it was made for a state of civilization or barbarism, if you please, which we have outgrown—there it stands, the Law which safeguards the Church and the Home—the law which you are sworn to maintain.

Something like this, no doubt, the prosecutor must have said, but his remarks were few—he did not care to invite a comparison. Besides, he knew his jurymen.

Colonel Ingersoll had made a speech that will live forever.

He lost his case.

New Jersey lost an opportunity.

II

A GREAT many people contend that we now enjoy in this country as much liberty (or toleration) as is good for us. To aim at the full measure which Colonel Ingersoll advocated is, in the opinion of these people, to advance the standard of Anarchy.

By this reasoning a man who is only half or three-quarters well is better off than one in perfect health.

Complete freedom is complete well-being.

Colonel Ingersoll was the foremost champion in our time of the rights of the liberal spirit.

It has been urged that he spent the best part of his life threshing out old theological straw, fighting battles that had been thoroughly fought out long before his day. Singularly enough, this position is usually taken by persons attached to the theological system against which Ingersoll waged a truceless war. There may be some virtue in the argument, but surely it is not that of consistency.

Let us be fair. Ingersoll was no mere echo and imitator of the great liberals who preceded him. He had a message of his own to

his own generation. He was the best-equipped, most formidable and persistent advocate of the liberal principle which this country, at least, has ever known; and it is extremely doubtful if his equal as a popular propagandist was to be found anywhere.

He took new ground. He carried the flag farther than any of his predecessors. He fought without compromise, neither seeking nor giving quarter. He believed in the sacredness of his cause—the holy cause of liberty. His was no tepid devotion, no Laodicean fervor, no timid acquiescence dictated by reason and half denied by fear.

That uncertain allegiance of the soul which Macaulay describes as the "paradise of cold hearts", was not for him. The temper of his zeal for liberty can be likened only to a consuming flame; it burned with ever-increasing ardor through all the years of his long life; it was active up to the very moment when jealous Death touched his eloquent lips with silence.

It was a grand passion, and, like every grand passion, it had grand results.

Heine has said that no man becomes greatly famous without passion; that it is the mark by

which we know the inspired man from the mere servant or spectator of events.

I see this mark in Abraham Lincoln—in the Gettysburg speech, in the Proclamation, and some of the Messages. The divine passion that announces a man with a mission and a destiny beyond his fellows.

I see this mark in Robert G. Ingersoll. I have lately read the greater part of his work—lectures, speeches, controversial writings—and the cumulative sense I take from it is that of wonder at the passion of the man. Perhaps it never found better, never attained higher, expression than in these words:

"I plead for light, for air, for opportunity. I plead for individual independence. I plead for the rights of labor and of thought. I plead for a chainless future. Let the ghosts go—justice remains. Let them disappear—men and women and children are left. Let the monsters fade away—the world is here with its hills and seas and plains, with its seasons of smiles and frowns, its spring of leaf and bud, its summer of shade and flower and murmuring stream, its autumn with the laden boughs, when the withered banners of the corn are still and gathered fields are growing strangely wan; while death, poetic death, with hands that color

what they touch, weaves in the autumn wood her tapestries of gold and brown.

"The world remains with its winters and homes and fire-sides, where grow and bloom the virtues of our race. Let the ghosts go—we will worship them no more.

"Man is greater than these phantoms. Humanity is grander than all the creeds, than all the books. Humanity is the great sea, and these creeds, and books, and religions are but the waves of a day. Humanity is the sky, and these religions and dogmas and theories are but the mists and clouds changing continually, destined finally to melt away.

"That which is founded on slavery, and fear, and ignorance cannot endure."

III

IT IS agreed by the opponents of Colonel Ingersoll that he was without influence upon the intelligent thought of his time—by which intelligent thought they perhaps mean to compliment themselves!

If this be true, we lack an explanation of the fact that his books and lectures are selling by the thousands, both in this country and in England. If the testimony of the bookstalls amounts to anything, then the great Agnostic

did not cast his "seed of perdition" upon barren ground. Whether for right or wrong, whether for good or evil, his word is marching on.

From the Silence that comes to all men he has gained a higher claim upon our attention, a more valid right to plead. We remember that he was faithful unto death. With the cessation of that defiant personality, about which so long raged the din of controversy, men have leave to study his best thought in the dry light of reason. He that is dead overcometh.

During his life Colonel Ingersoll gave and took many hard blows—that is, he fought his adversaries with the weapons of their choice.

Often it seemed to those who were in sympathy with much that he said, with much that he contended for, that he might have used softer words; that he might have dealt less brutally with inherited beliefs and prejudices; in short, that he might have employed rosewater instead of vitriol.

The answer to this is, Colonel Ingersoll fought without compromise. From his first public utterance he made his position plain. He never faltered, shuffled or equivocated. He knew that mutual compliments cloud the issue; he asked none, gave none.

But the fact really is, he was far kinder and more charitable toward his adversaries than they were toward him. Besides, they had a great advantage in unkindness: they were always sending him to their Hell—and he had *no Hell* to send them to!

However, I do not believe that Colonel Ingersoll would have fared much better at the hands of the clergy had he, while professing infidelity, made his declaration of unfaith in the mildest and most colorless terms. Euphemism would not have saved the Colonel, and this he well knew, having one of the most logical minds in the world.

No infidel was ever so tender toward the sensibilities of the orthodox as Ernest Renan, who, though he left the altar, yet (as Ingersoll shrewdly said) carried the incense a great part of his journey with him.

Renan's attitude toward the old Faith which he had renounced was that of a sentimental iconoclast—but an iconoclast, for all that. He wrote his "Life of Jesus" with a kind of pious infidelity, coloring it with such euphemism, handling it with such precaution, that some persons took it for an orthodox account. He discloses his motive in the prefaces, but almost suppresses

it in the body of the book. His criticism is the best in the world, his romance no better than Chateaubriand's—a woman said that the "Life of Jesus" read as if it were going to end with a marriage! In my poor opinion, one or two chapters of Renan's "Recollections" are worth "The Life of Jesus".

Renan loved the grand old Church which had educated him, as his "dearest foe". His mind had been formed by contact with her at a hundred points. The poetry of her ritual, the pomp of her service, the grandeur of her titles, the majesty of her spiritual dominion, never quite lost their power to impress his soul—even when he was prophesying that the days of her greatness were numbered. He spoke of the clergy always with respect, often with compliment, declaring in his latest book that he had never known a bad priest. He abhorred all coarseness, all invective, all vulgarity, all violence. Nothing common, low or brutal was ever suffered to mar the translucent mirror of his perfect style. In theory a democrat, he had the mental manners which are fostered by a clerical aristocracy. Every faculty of his mind paid homage to the Church, except his reason. Renan never lost his feeling of reverence for

the sacred mysteries of the Faith in which his youth was cradled—but he wrote the "Prayer on the Acropolis". He rebuked Strauss and Feuerbach for the ruthless way in which they attacked the Christian legend—he pleaded for tenderness in demolishing a religion which had been the hope of the world. He confessed that he never could wholly put off the cassock, and he seemed like an unfrocked bishop on the heights of science. If ever an infidel deserved charity at the hands of the clergy, that infidel was Renan.

Did he get it? The answer is, that not even Voltaire was assailed with a greater virulence of ecclesiastical rancor—the most infernal malice ever planted in the heart of man.*

Alas, the ecclesiastical spirit too often seems the same in all ages! It crucified Jesus of Nazareth, it burned Giordano Bruno. When Servetus writhed at the stake in his death agony, Calvin, his murderer, drew nearer, saluted him as the son of the Devil and piously committed his soul to Hell.

* This remark admits of some notable exceptions. Father William Barry, an eminent English writer, has done a fair and justly appreciative Life of Renan (Scribner's) while making no concession to his agnostic views. Several priests who knew Renan in his youth or during his novitiate have written of him with respect and humane feeling.

Renan was cursed and slandered with that special ingenuity which has always belonged to the custodians of Divine Truth, and the priests whom he was in the habit of complimenting, with great fervor of unanimity saluted him as the Anti-Christ!

Colonel Ingersoll's reasoning was good. Compliments are vain in an irreconcilable conflict.

IV

MOST speeches are not literature—they do not read as they were heard, as they were spoken. Lacking the living voice, the speaking eye, the personality from which they derived their force, they seem cold, inanimate, without that vital principle which is the product of genius and art.

The orator's triumphs are usually short-lived, like those of an actor. They are the children of the time, not of the eternities.

But there are exceptions, though rare, and among these we may reckon the best speeches of Colonel Ingersoll.

Our American literature has nothing better of their kind than the Decoration Day Oration, the lectures on Ghosts, Orthodoxy, Super-

stition, Individuality, Liberty for Man, Woman and Child, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Humboldt, Thomas Paine, and some others.

These are so vital, so charged with intellectual power, so instinct with a passionate love of truth and justice, so eloquent and logical, so clear and convincing—above all, so readable—that they can afford to dispense with the living voice—that is, they are, in a true sense, literature.

I doubt if this enviable distinction belongs in equal measure to the work of any other American orator.

The explanation is, that Colonel Ingersoll was an artist as well as an orator: he knew that without the preserving touch of art, the most impassioned oratory soon goes back to common air. He was one of the great masters of our English speech, never seeking the abstruse or the obsolete, believing that the tongue of Shakespeare was adequate to every necessity of argument, every excursion of fancy, every sentiment of poetry, every demand of oratory.

His skill in construction, in antithesis, in balancing periods, in leading up to the lofty climax which crowned the whole, was that of

a wizard of speech. He never fell short or came tardy off—his means were always adequate to his ends and the close of every speech was like a strain of music. Rich as his mind was, immense his intellectual resources, undaunted the bravery of his spirit, there was yet manifest in all his work the wise husbandry of genius. His power never ran to excess; never dwindled to impotence.

Nature, too, is economical and dislikes to double her gifts: yet this man was a true poet as well as a great orator. I have quoted above a paragraph from one of his orations, which is the fine gold of sterling poetry.

Charles Lamb tells us that "Prose hath her harmonies no less than Verse", and we know that the speech of every true orator is rhythmic. It was eminently so with Colonel Ingersoll, who, like Dickens, often fell unconsciously into blank verse. Here are a few examples taken at random; and first this bit of what we are now calling "nature poetry":

The rise and set of sun,
The birth and death of day,
The dawns of silver and the dusks of gold,
The wonders of the rain and snow,
The shroud of winter and

The many-colored robes of spring;
The lonely moon with nightly loss or gain,
The serpent lightning and the thunder's voice,
The tempest's fury and the breath of morn,
The threat of storm and promise of the bow.

Nothing could excel in beauty and metrical grace this description of the old classic myths:

They thrilled the veins of Spring with tremulous desire,
Made tawny Summer's billowed breast the throne and home of Love;
Filled Autumn's arms with sun-kissed grapes and gathered sheaves;
And pictured Winter as a weak old king
Who felt, like Lear, upon his withered face, Cordelia's tears.

This on Shakespeare, reveals the poet in the orator:

He knew the thrills and ecstasies of love,
The savage joys of hatred and revenge.
He heard the hiss of envy's snakes
And watched the eagles of ambition soar.
There was no hope that did not put its star above his head—
No fear he had not felt—
No joy that had not shed its sunshine on his face.

The critics, I am aware, make this kind of writing a fault in prose, but we should be glad to get real poetry, wherever we may find it. Colonel Ingersoll's greatest distinction as a poet is, that he never fails to interest us:—in this particular, at least, the regular metre-mongers may well envy him.

V

I LIKE his distinct literary style—the style of his miscellanies, of his controversial papers, of his occasional bits of wisdom and fancy and criticism. Perhaps the thoroughly human side of the man is best seen in these unrelated efforts—these vagrant children of his mind. You know that this man thought before he took the pen in hand. He writes without pretence, without the vices of the literary habit, without artifice or evasion,—clearly, frankly, as a gentleman should speak. In written controversy he was relentless in his logic,—pressing the point home,—but unfailing in courtesy. As he himself would have said, his mental manners were good—they were at any rate "sweetness and light" compared with those of his adversaries.

He did not profess to love his enemies, yet he treated them more humanely than many who made that profession.

We are never to forget that the chief article of his offending was, that he made war upon the Dogma of an everlasting Hell.

In his controversies he was never worsted, from a rational standpoint *(sic)*, and his victories seem not less due to his own fairness in argument and tenacity of logic than to the weakness and confusion of his opponents. The natural and supernatural can not maintain a profitable argument. They can never agree and, strictly speaking, one can not overcome the other—they occupy separate realms.

It is useless for a man who believes in miracles to argue with a man who does not—a miracle and a fact are in the nature of things irreconcilable.

Renan said to the theologians, "Come, gentlemen, let us have one miracle here before the savants in Paris—that will end the dispute forever." He asked in vain—miracles are no longer granted for the conversion of infidels, and if they occur at all, it is before witnesses whose faith predisposes them to belief. It may be hazarded that no one ever believed

in a miracle who did not wish to believe in it.

In a purely rational view it must be allowed that the honors of controversy usually fell to Colonel Ingersoll. His apparent victories were, of course, easily waived by those who believed that they had Divine Truth on their side. Yet they must have regretted that the supernatural can be so ill defended. That all the advantage of reason would seem to be with the enemy of light. That one who can make himself understood should prevail over the champion of Revealed Truth, which is in its nature incomprehensible. That it should be so hard to square reason with revelation, fact with fable, method with miracle, dreams with demonstrations.

Of all these tourneys of skill and wit and logic, Colonel Ingersoll is seen at his best in his reply to Gladstone. Perhaps nothing that he ever did more thoroughly certifies the power and keenness of his mind, the bed-rock of his convictions. He was like an athlete rejoicing in his strength; merciful to his adversary, as feeling that the victory was sure; always conscious of his power, but ruling himself with perfect poise. The one touch of malice he al-

lowed himself was when he quoted for Mr. Gladstone's benefit the saying of Aristotle, that "clearness is the virtue of style":—this arrow pierced the heart of the British behemoth.

In truth Mr. Gladstone, the master of many languages, the world-famed orator, the "most learned layman of Europe", appeared at a manifest disadvantage in his duel with the American. He tried to write in the "Bishop's voice", to overawe his adversary with Greek and Latin quotations, omitting to give the English equivalent. He begged the question, floundered about it, did everything but argue it, and finally took refuge behind the "exuberance of his own verbosity". Colonel Ingersoll, cool, urbane, inflexible, asked only for the facts; Mr. Gladstone, flustered, irritated, conscious of his weakness, had apparently none to give and raised a cloud of words. The world waited eagerly for Mr. Gladstone's rejoinder: it never came, and the trophies of debate seemed to rest with the American. Needless to say, this left the great Question still at issue.

VI

COLONEL INGERSOLL has been so slandered and defamed by the intemperate friends of orthodox religion that many people have no just idea of the man or of the principles for which he contended. Slander is too often the favorite weapon of persons who claim to love their enemies as themselves. It was used so effectively against Voltaire that even at this late day many liberal Christians are afraid to read him.

Separating the *odium theologicum* from the argument and the slanderous motive of those who libel a sublime cause by their uncharity, let us see how the matter really stands.

Did Ingersoll say there is no God?

No; he said he did not know.

What did he deny as to God?

He denied the existence of the personal Jewish God—the Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures.

He denied and repudiated the dogma of an eternal Hell, said to have been made by Jehovah in order to gratify his revenge upon the great majority of the human race.

Did he attack Christianity?

He attacked only what he conceived to be the evil part of it, in so far as it justified and continued the curses of the Old Testament. He made a distinction between the real and the theological Christ: the first he honored as a great moral teacher and a martyr of freedom, killed by the orthodox priests of his day; the second he denied and repudiated as a creation of men.

Did he believe in a Hereafter?

He believed that no one could know whether there is or is not a future life of the soul. But he was not without the hope of immortality which has in all ages cheered and fortified the heart of man.

It follows from all this that he did not accept the Revelation of the Hebrew Bible, its cosmogony, geology or morality; nor the New Testament with its Scheme of Atonement and threat of Eternal Damnation—God suffering in his own person for the sins of the world, yet condemning the far greater number of his children to everlasting pain.

What positive effect had his example and teaching?

It liberalized the creeds in spite of themselves.

It made the preaching of Hell unpopular.

It made for sanity in religion and enlarged the province of honest doubt.

It caused men to think more of the simple human virtues and less of the theological ones.

There is no doubt at all that it saved many from the madhouse who might have accused themselves of committing the Unpardonable Sin.

It helped to make better husbands, kinder fathers, more loyal and loving sons.

It was a great step toward freedom and light. It enlarged the horizon of hope—it advanced the standard of liberty.

Colonel Ingersoll was a free man, talking in a country where all are presumed to be free, yet his courage, more than the laws, protected him.

He upheld public and private morality and was himself an exemplar of both.

He loved only one woman as his wife and lived with her in perfect honor and fidelity. He loved his children and was idolized by them.

His abilities and services reflected honor upon the state.

It is agreed that but for his religious views, he might have reached the greatest honor in the Nation's gift. As it is, he has gained a

place in the Republic of Intellect to which few of our Presidents may aspire.

His crime was, that he had elected to exercise his reason, had interrogated Revelation, put Moses in the witness-box, and asked for the facts.

VII

IT IS claimed by certain critics that Colonel Ingersoll, being defective in scientific equipment as well as in exact scholarship, was unable to produce such effects by his teaching as might otherwise have been feared by the orthodox. It seems to me the contention is quite unsupported by logic or fact. True, Colonel Ingersoll was neither a Darwin nor a Huxley, neither a Tyndall nor a Spencer. He lacked the special training and scientific grasp of all these, as well as the searching erudition and ripened philosophic spirit of Ernest Renan, in our time the chief protagonist in the domain of liberal thought. But had Colonel Ingersoll been other than he was, it is doubtful if he would have achieved so distinct an effect. In mere scholarship he was at least equal if not superior to Thomas Paine, and he was no more unscientific than Voltaire. As a propagandist of liberal

opinions, and as a living force, he was far greater than the former by virtue of the free play accorded to his vigorous and persuasive eloquence. That his influence in no way approaches that of Voltaire, is not a fact which demands explanation. A stream can not rise higher than its source. The whole liberal movement may almost be said to have proceeded from the great Frenchman, whose portentous eminence remains secured to him alone.

But if Ingersoll was neither scientific in a profound sense, nor cultured in a scholastic one, he was not the less manifestly cut out for his work. He gave his audiences just what they expected to get and were glad to pay for—oratory, which it serves no purpose now to disparage and which, in spite of all disparagement, often rose to a noble height and strain. Wit that played like lambent lightning about the old structures of belief, showing many an obscure niche and cranny that, mayhap, had escaped the torches of earlier investigators. Pathos that proved the poet in the orator and needed only a metrical expression—nay, sometimes unconsciously attained it. Humor that evinced this man's sympathetic touch with his fellow men and that not seldom won their regard

when all the protean resources of his eloquence had failed to persuade. Lastly, a gracious and noble presence,

> Where every god did seem to set his seal
> To give the world assurance of a man;

and a voice whose thrilling organ melody it will long be the solace of many thousands to have heard.

How much of the Colonel will live as a permanent legacy, is a graver question than that of his influence upon his contemporaries. *Littera scripta manet,* and the Ingersollian word is, essentially, the spoken word. Most of his writings are cast in the form of speeches; were obviously written to be delivered as such. John Morley notes this as a sensible depreciation of a great part of Macaulay's brilliant work.

The finer note addressed to the mental ear is more palpably lacking in the American. One sees this at once by turning from Colonel Ingersoll's speeches to the papers of his controversy with Gladstone, to which I have already referred. In these letters Colonel Ingersoll displays a closeness of reasoning, a dialectic fence, an analytic subtlety, which are quite foreign to his ordinary processes. The fact is, that

Colonel Ingersoll, being a born pleader and skilled, moreover, in a long course of forensic training, adopted too much, perhaps, in his speeches, the lawyer's plan of making the most of the adversary's weak points. Hence, the brutality, at times, of Ingersoll's philippics against the Christian religion, and hence, also, the unlikelihood of their being permanently embodied in the canon of liberal faith. The keenness of the critical spirit was in Colonel Ingersoll; in its charity he was often wanting.

VIII

COLONEL INGERSOLL belongs with the select company of the great Americans.

He is of the fellowship of Jefferson and Franklin, of Lincoln and Sumner. His patriotism was second only to his passion for universal liberty. He loved his country beyond everything except freedom. He was not a fireside patriot—the temper of his devotion had been proved in the baptism of battle. His patriotic speeches rank with the best in our literature: the Vision of War is as high an utterance

as Lincoln's Gettysburg Speech and as surely immortal.

He was a great American, loving liberty, fraternity, equality. He hated the spirit of Caste which he saw rising among our people, and he struck at it with all the force of his honest anger.

He despised the worship of titles among the rich, their tuft-hunting, aping of aristocratic airs and mean prostration before the self-styled nobility of the Old World. To him the most loathsome object in the world was an American ashamed of his country.

He urged that the representatives of republics should have precedence at Washington. He condemned the flummery of our diplomatic etiquette, the foolish kow-towing designed to flatter the ambassadors of servile nations.

His patriotism was purer than that of our Christian statesmen who wish to subjugate in the name of liberty—to expand in territory and contract in honor.

He was an individualist, believing that equal rights and equal opportunities hold the solution of every social problem.

He saw no evil in wealth, save the abuse of it, and he did not think it a virtue to be poor.

He believed that everyone was entitled to comfort, well-being, happiness in this world. He denied that God has purposely divided his children into rich and poor; he saw in this the teaching of a false religious system which has sanctioned every oppression and injustice, and has cursed the earth with misery.

He regarded pauperism not as a proof of the special favor of God, but as an indictment of man.

He was a lover of justice, of mercy, of humanity. He was a true friend of the toiling millions and in their behalf pleaded for a working day of eight hours. Christianity had long suffered it, but he was unwilling that a single overburdened creature should "curse God and die".

He pleaded for the abolition of the death penalty, that relic of savagery. He hated all forms of cruelty and violence, but especially those that claim the sanction of law. He denounced the whipping post in Delaware—and Delaware replied by a threat to indict him for blasphemy.

He pleaded for the abolition of poverty and drunkenness, for the fullest liberation of woman, for the rights of the child.

His great heart went out in sympathy to everything that suffers—to the dumb animals, beaten and overladen; to the feathered victims of caprice and cruelty.

The circle of this man's philanthropy was complete. He filled the measure of patriotism, of civic duty, of the sacred relations of husband and father, of generosity and kindness toward his fellow men. But he had committed treason against the Unknown, and this, in spite of the fame and success which his talents commanded, made of him a social Pariah. The herd admired and envied his freedom, but for the most part they gave him the road and went by on the other side.

IX

THIS country is freer and better for the life of Colonel Ingersoll.

There is more light, more air in the prison-house of theology.

God may be a guess, but man is a certainty; men are thinking more of their obligations toward those about them—the weak, the helpless, the fallen,—and less about securing for themselves a halo and a harp in the New Jerusalem.

Ingersoll's great lesson that men can not love one another if they believe in a God of hate, is bearing fruit.

The hypocrite shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Truth will yet compel all the churches to cease libelling God and to honor humanity. . . .

The great man whose worth and work I have barely glanced at in these pages, said bravely, that he cared less for the freedom of religion than for the Religion of Freedom. When that larger light shall flood the world—and not until then—his services to the cause of Truth, of Liberty and Humanity will be fitly honored.

As for his literary testament, I find it easy to believe that many a noble sentence winged with the utmost felicity of speech, many a fine sentiment, the fruit of his kindlier thought, many a tender word spoken to alleviate the sorrow of death, will long remain. Even the professed critics who make so small ado of the Colonel's literary merits, may well envy him the noble essay on Shakespeare, the more powerful one on Voltaire, or the beautiful memorial tribute to Walt Whitman. And it may be that "so long as love kisses the lips of

death", so long shall men and women, in the nighted hour of grief and loss, bless the name of him who touched the great heart of humanity in that high and unmatched deliverance at his brother's grave. . . .

From a sunken Syrian tomb long antedating the Christian era, Ernest Renan brushed away the dust and found inscribed thereon the single word,

"Courage!"

IV

RICHARD WAGNER'S ROMANCE

THE story of the man of genius who finds inspiration in another man's wife is not a new one, and it may even be called trite, but it is one to which the world always lends a willing ear.

This is the story revealed in the English version of the letters of Richard Wagner to Mathilde Wesendonck. In Germany, sweet land of sentiment, the book has reached the twentieth edition and is generally acclaimed as a true classic. In Germany, also, the alleged Platonic motive of the letters, elsewhere looked at askance, is easily admitted, since, as is well known to the nightingales and the lindens, a German lover will pursue an ardent courtship through a dozen years without daring once to put an arm around his divinity's waist. Art and love are a great patience in Germany.

They were surely so in the case of Richard Wagner; and it is characteristic of the Teuton

that he has left the world in doubt as to whether his patience was ever rewarded.

The doubt is indeed the chief provocation of these letters (outside of Germany), and furnishes the artistic motive by which they will endure.

Or, to put the matter plainly, *the other man's wife* supplies the interest of this book. As of many others in the chronicle of greatness.

Think you, had these letters been addressed to Frau Wagner, that all the chaste nightingales of Germany would now be tuning in their praise? Or that our own sentimentalists, with the unsexed Corybantes of music, would be swelling such a chorus of acclaim? Would the world be eager to identify Frau Wagner with the conception of "Isolde", and should we be hearing all this patter about ideal union of souls, spiritual passion, etc., etc.? Not so!—the world will not tolerate the indecency of a man of genius loving his wife and personifying her in the creations of his art.

There is not a single truly famous book in the world's literature, of letters written by a man of genius to his wife.

The letters are always written to some other

woman and, preferably, *some other man's wife*. Why this should be so, only the good Lord knows who made us as we are.

Poor Penelope keeps house, often red-eyed and sad, during the excursions of genius; she treasures up with a broken-hearted care and stores away in a lavender-scented drawer with the early love-letters (of which the genius is now ashamed) curt messages on postal cards—hurry-up requests for clean linen or an extra "nighty"; express tags speaking eloquently of some cheap gift by which the great man discharged the obligation of writing (preserved by the simple soul because he had scrawled her name upon them); and perhaps a small packet of letters that deal wholly with HIS ideas of domestic government, usually couched in a peevish tone and with a hard selfishness of intention that strangely contrasts with the man's meditated, public revelation of self—not a flower of the heart in them all, as poor Penelope, starving for a word of love, sees through her dropping tears.

Now these things have some value to a neglected wife, but they can not usefully be worked up in the biography of a man of genius.

What wonder that Penelope takes into her

tender bosom the subtle demon of jealousy, becomes a shrew and a scold, and presently—goaded by the man's cold and steady refusal to satisfy her by giving her the love which she knows with a woman's sure instinct is being secretly lavished upon another—what wonder, I say, that Penelope under such maddening provocation, finding herself a cheated and unloved wife, becomes that favorite handiwork of the Devil on this earth—a good woman turned into a Fury!

And the beauty of it is, that at this moment she sets out to justify, in the wrong-headed fashion of a woman who knows that she can take her marriage certificate to Heaven with her,—the infidelity of her husband!

He, being a man of genius, easily gets the sympathy of the world—especially of all good and virtuous women, every one of whom feels that she would have been able to satisfy the gifted person and keep him properly straight. And the great man adds to the laurel of fame the crown of domestic martyrdom.

Of course, the injured wife might have played her game better, but it was not in the cards for her to win,—having married a genius.

So it has come to be an axiom that the artistic temperament disqualifies a man for the sober state of matrimony; and many are the cases cited to prove it, from the wife of Socrates to Jane Welsh Carlyle or Frau Wagner. The woes of the unhappily mated genius clamor down the ages like the harsh echoes of a family row before the policeman reaches the corner. Also they make a large figure in what is called polite literature, especially as the sorely tried genius finds in the sorrows of his hearth a strong incentive to the production of copy. Hence the thing is not without its compensations, and the lovers of gossip, who are always the chief patrons of literature, do not seek their food in vain.

I suspect that the matter of vanity has much to do with cooking the domestic troubles—*his* word is "tragedy"!—of the genius. It is very hard to domesticate the species, and wonderful is the arrogance which the notion of genius will breed in the homeliest man, causing him to look with easy contempt on the beautiful woman who perhaps married him out of pity. The artist is the peacock among husbands—his lofty soul, his majestic port, his rainbow plumage, and even, as he thinks, the beauty of his

voice—that top note especially!—move him to a measureless disdain of the annoyingly constant, unvaried and tiresome hero-worship of his plain little mate—it is quite curious how, after a time, he comes even to ignore her beauty. To be sure, she has her home uses, and very convenient on occasion these are, even to the most glorious of peacocks; but he is for the Cosmos and must not limit his resplendency to a narrow poultry-yard—go to, woman! And there you are.

Then, of course, the artist must always be in quest of new sensations,—in other words, must feed his genius, to which satiety is death; and it seems to be agreed that such sensations and experiences are only to be had from other women, or at least, *some other woman*—and how are you going to get away from that?

I have heard of a certain man, of coarse fibre, who would have given his soul to be thought an artist; who plotted, asleep and awake, during long years, to get rid of his lawful wife and take on a woman he believed to be his affinity. The man's passionate desire to work this wrong gave him a kind of power and eloquence which, strange to say, failed him when at last he had succeeded in carrying out

his purpose. And then, so gossip ran, he wished to win the old love back again (coupled in his memory with both unrest and power), but that, of course, was hopeless; so that verily the last state of this man was worse than the first.

All of which is not without bearing upon the story of Richard Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonck.

I am not concerned to upset the Platonic theory, so dear to German sentimentalists, of the love-affair between the great Wagner and the wife of Herr Wesendonck. People will judge according to the evidence and their private feelings. It must be allowed that there are expressions in the letters that would go far toward establishing a *crim. con.* in the case of any but a German like Wagner, and a master sentimentalist at that. Such a passage as this for example:

"Once more, that thou couldst hurl thyself on every conceivable sorrow of the world to say to me, 'I love thee', redeemed me and won for me that 'solemn pause' whence my life has gained another meaning.

"But that state divine indeed was only to be won at cost of all the griefs and pains of love—we have drunk them to their very dregs! And now, after suffering every sorrow, being spared

no grief, now must the quick of that higher life show clearly what we have won through all the agony of those birth-throes."

I repeat, only a German sentimentalist could hold such language without compelling an obvious conclusion. The fact that in the face of this and similarly passionate avowals, public opinion in Germany absolves the lovers of any positive guilt in their relations, is a high tribute to that national virtue which was anciently celebrated by Tacitus and more recently by Heinrich Heine.

It is the greater pity that the present English translation should have been made by a gushing, lymphatic person, one W. Ashton Ellis, who instead of suffering the letters to speak for themselves, writes a silly preface wherein he seeks to clear Frau Wesendonck's character, in advance, and thereby naturally awakens the reader's doubts. I protest but for this marplot fellow I should have set it all down to the account of German sentimentalism and have laid the book aside without hearing anything worse than the nightingale in the linden, pouring forth his soul in the enchanted moonlight of German poesy. But now it is spoiled for me by such twaddle as this:

"This placid, sweet Madonna, the perfect emblem of a pearl, not opal, her eyes still dreaming of Nirvana,—no! emphatically no! she could not once have been swayed by carnal passion. In these letters all is pure and spiritual, a Dante and a Beatrice; so must it have been in their intercourse."

Which illustrates how the defence is so often fatal in matters of literary biography. And yet I have not heard of a literary man wise enough to ask that neither his memory nor his acts should ever be defended.

Many a small person contrives to attract a moment's notice by defending the silent great.

Fame has no more subtle irony.

Richard Wagner met Mathilde Wesendonck in 1852 when he was forty years old and she twenty-four. He had already written "Rienzi", "The Flying Dutchman", "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin". Nobody has ever dreamed of attributing the inspiration of any of these works to his wife Minna.

It is seldom indeed that a woman is credited with inspiring a man of genius—after she has married him. As a literary theory the thing is not popular.

Wagner's wife had been an opera singer.

It is admitted even by the great man's jealous biographers, that she was of more than ordinary beauty, that she shared bravely his early hardships and that she was a pure and loyal wife.

But it seems certain that she did not inspire the great man. In his later life he was wont to say that his wedlock had been nothing but a trial of his patience and pity; perhaps he was indebted for this to his vanity rather than his recollection.

Mathilde, on the contrary, was Wagner's inspiration, for has he not told us so?—though, to be sure, we may credit her with inspiring only one opera, "Tristan and Isolde". Unfortunately, she was the wife of another man, but again, fortunately, her husband was of a truly Germanic simplicity and childlike trust.

Herr Wesendonck was also a man of means and could give his wife the indulgence of many luxuries and whims, which must have added to her attractiveness in the eyes of the struggling man of genius. Money has never been known to cheapen the charms of a really desirable woman.

Portraits of Mathilde show a Madonna-like face of pure and delicate outline, with eyes of

haunting tenderness and a mouth of sensitive appeal—such lips, so sweet yet sad, so inviting yet so free from sensual suggestion, are seen only among the higher types of German beauty. Not, I grant you, a face indicating carnal passion, but what then?—many a woman who looked like a Madonna has loved not wisely but too well, and some have been known to bear children in the human fashion.

I have never seen a portrait of Herr Wesendonck.

Truly he deserves one for consenting to the romance which has immortalized his name. Wagner seems to have felt this when he once wrote Herr Wesendonck that the latter should have a place with him in the history of art. In this letter Wagner says nothing of the fine set of horns which (outside of Germany) an evil-minded generation has freely awarded his generous friend.

Mark here again the gushing Ellis:

"It is as a knightly figure that he (Herr Wesendonck) will ever abide in the memory of all who met him, and surely truer knightliness than he displayed in a singularly difficult conjuncture, can nowhere have been found outside King Arthur's court. Undoubtedly it was

he who was the greatest sufferer for several years,—by no means Minna,—years of perpetual heart-burnings bravely borne."

Herr Wesendonck was indeed a pattern husband for a young woman of romantic yearnings.

He shared her admiration for Wagner's genius and for a long time refused to see that his wife was actuated by any other motive.

He gave Wagner financial aid and finally offered him, with Minna, a home in a pretty cottage on his estate at Zurich.

He tolerated the connection even after it had become the occasion of bitter quarrels on his domestic hearth.

On the whole, I am persuaded that a figure of like Chivalry is not to be found outside of Germany, nor perhaps anywhere since the noble Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance.

Mathilde's few letters tell us nothing—her soul is never unveiled—she compels us to take Wagner's word for the whole of the romance. Her attitude in this correspondence—if such it may be called—puts the great man in a dubious light. We may not think the less of the artist, but the man loses nobility; Herr Wesendonck gets his revenge.

But at last Minna intercepted one of Wagner's letters to Mathilde (which is not given in this collection), and delivered it herself, with words suiting the occasion. Naturally, this broke up the arrangements at Zurich; Wagner sent his wife back to her parents and betook himself to Venice. Herr Wesendonck's conduct in the circumstances was without a flaw; this admirable man seems truly worthy both of Germany and Spain.

There is a harmless mania for identifying particular persons with poetic creations, and with such hints as Wagner constantly threw out during the period of their attachment, it was impossible that Mathilde should escape.

"With thee I can do all things," he said, "without thee, nothing!"

This was not strictly true, however, and must be taken as poetic license, since he wrote several operas before meeting her and did some of his greatest work long after the parting.

But let me not discourage the sentimentalists. It is true that he said, "For having written the 'Tristan' I thank you from my deepest soul to all eternity."

It is also certain that he used to write his

music with a gold pen that Mathilde had given him, and that in exile he received from her a package of his favorite zwieback with tears of joy. For these and other reasons I would not deny her title to be regarded as the original inspiration of "Tristan and Isolde".

Still, we have all heard of another enamored young person who, when her lover had got himself somewhat desperately out of the way—

"Went on cutting bread and butter."

Absence, it appears, had some effect in cooling the romantic fervors of Mathilde. Some half-dozen years after the rupture at Zurich, that "child of our sorrows, Tristan and Isolde", as Wagner lovingly wrote her and to which her name for good or evil is now linked forever, was produced for the first time in Munich.

Mathilde had the earliest invitation, with the composer's own compliments; but she did not attend, and the heart of Minna was not harrowed by seeing her name "among those present".

It is no reproach to the nightingales of Germany that they sang longer in the heart of her lover. . . .

And the lindens bloom on immortally.

V

IN THE RED ROOM

SURELY there was nothing supernatural about the manner of it. The thing happened in a brilliantly lighted room where I was one of a hundred persons, all occupied with the very material business of dining, and dining well. No environment could be more unsuited to a visitor or a message from the Beyond. The lights, the music, the noise of incoming or departing guests, the bustling waiters, the hum of joyous conversation punctuated with the popping of wine corks, the deep tones of men, the staccato laughter of women, —these were the accompaniment of the strangest experience of my life, to which I hesitate to give a name.

And then, oh my God! can a Ghost eat? can a Ghost drink? can a Ghost talk, and yet attract no notice in a crowded company of feasting men and women?

Let me re-word the matter—a thing which

Hamlet tells us "madness would gambol from"; let me by the strictest effort of memory and reason strip the supernatural from it, if I may. . . .

I was dining alone in a corner of *his* favorite French café; in the Red Room, too, of whose cheerful warmth and brightness of color *he* had been outspokenly fond in his hearty way. He had introduced me to this place and here we had often dined together. Here or elsewhere, alas, we should dine together no more . . . he died suddenly in his youth and strength some four years ago.

Always I think of him when I am in the Red Room of this café, whether alone or in company; but this night the thought, the image, the vital recollection of him, faultless in every detail, possessed me absolutely. I had made very little progress with my dinner, and had taken but one glass of Château Palmer, when I resigned myself to the sad pleasure of keeping tryst with his memory.

First of all, my mind dwelt on our friendship: how sweet it was, how firm, how true; with never a doubt to mar it, never a cold wind of jealousy or envy to blow upon it. We were lovers,—for such friendship between men is a

purer sentiment than the love of man and woman, only the nobler emotions of the heart being engaged.

We were neither too old nor too young for a real friendship; both were still well under that chilly meridian where men usually part with the generosities and enthusiasms of life in order to take on the prudences and self-calculations. Of the two he was the junior, but he assumed a kind of specious seniority by virtue of his physical bigness and his greater success in battling with the world. O friend, how true in your case that the battle is not always to the strong!

I recalled how the anticipation of dining with him, in this very Red Room, was quite the most exquisite pleasure I have known, no woman ever having given me the like—though I am anything but a hater of women. And I said to myself with a sigh that there were not left in all the world three men, the thought of dining with whom could yield me an equal joy.

That is, I maintain, the crucial test of friendship. Do you like to dine with him? Not without a deep meaning was of old the life of a man held sacred with whom one had shared bread and salt. The sacramental rite of an-

cient hospitality persists under our less simple and less beautiful forms. Nor may we violate it with impunity, barbarians as we are:—Nature cries out against our performing this act with one whom we dislike or mistrust, or even toward whom we are indifferent. In a word, I had rather make love to a woman who affects me with a physical repulsion than dine with a man I don't like. The fact proves the perfect sympathy existing between our physical and psychic selves, and from this dual voice there is no appeal—it is the highest court of human nature.

This was the very thought in my mind when, raising the second glass of Bordeaux to my lips, I saw *him* . . . and set it down untasted.

He came into the room at the farthest entrance leading direct to the street, and shouldered his way through the crowd of guests and waiters in his old big careless manner, which never failed to move the admiration of women and the resentment of men. He was dressed as I had so often seen him, not in regulation evening clothes, but in a suit of some rich gray material which he wore as if it were a part of him, with a light overcoat tossed over his arm:—it was in the early days of April.

The shouldering gray-suited giant, picked out in strong relief from all the black-clad guests, came straight toward me across the crowded room, his fine head, crowned with auburn curls, held solidly erect on a columnar neck; the smiling, eager challenge of his eye bent upon me.

What I thought God alone knows, if indeed I was not deprived of all conscious power of thinking in that terrible moment. And yet, obedient to old habit, I tried to rise from my chair to greet him, but found myself utterly paralyzed. Neither hand nor foot could I move.

But though my body was stricken lifeless by the presence of the Supernatural, my soul, strange to say, remained calm and without terror. And great as was the physical shock of the fear which held me now as in a vise, I yet wondered that our neighbors, almost elbowing us, seemed to pay no attention either to him or to me. . . .

"Don't get up, old fellow; you're a bit shaken. I'll just sit here, if you don't mind, and have a taste of your dinner and a sip of your Château Palmer—*you always did like the red.*"

His voice!—the same genial tones in it that had ever such power to thrill me. Oh! I could believe it all a dream, an hallucination arising from some disorder of the senses, were it not for that voice whose tones are registered in my heart. In obedience to a nod from me,—for I could not have spoken had my life depended on it,—the waiter, without the least apparent show of concern, laid another plate. From his manner I could not divine if he were conscious of the presence of my Guest.

Ah! then I knew it was indeed my friend over whose untimely grave the grass had withered and the winds had blown during four long years. For in the old loving big-brotherly way, he began to play the host as of yore, to heap my plate with good things, and to fill my glass with cheerful assiduity. "I'm afraid you must often go hungry without me to help you, old boy", he said, with the old kind smile.

Still, I could not speak, but at his bidding I ate my share of the dinner. He too partook, though lightly, and soon we had made an end of it. Then the waiter having cleared the table and served the coffee, he offered me a

cigarette from a full box—his old favorite brand, I noticed—and lit one himself.

I watched him mutely, with emotions which I may not describe—perhaps rather with a tense suspension of all emotion, save that of a fearful expectancy.

He spoke: "You thought of me so lovingly and insistently to-night, in this place where we have often been happy together, that I had to come to you. Love is the one thing, you see, that has power to recall us from the Shadow."

He paused, and the flute-like laughter of women rose high above the surrounding hum of talk and the surded strains of the orchestra. There came into his eye a light I well knew.

Nodding his head whence the laughter had proceeded, he went on:

"The keenest part of your regret for me, my friend, is that I who loved *that* so much should have had to die in the flower of my youth." . . .

Even as he spoke my mind like lightning overran his brief career. I saw him as he was when he came from the rugged North to the Big Town, a young giant in his health and strength, and in his eager appetite for pleasure. I marked in him that terrible passion for women to which so many splendid and gener-

ous natures are sacrificed; that craving for action and excitement which eats the sword in the scabbard; that tiger thirst for the enchanted Goblet of Life which would drain all to the dregs at a single draught; that devouring energy which knows no rest but with daring hand would tear aside the curtain betwixt day and day.

He went on as if I had spoken my thoughts aloud: "Yes, there is nothing of all this about us but I have had, my boy, and good measure—as you were thinking. Life owes me nothing, even though I did close my account at thirty; I lived every minute of my time—got all there was coming to me or to any man. No regrets! If I could come back for keeps I would not live otherwise, do otherwise, than I have lived and done. Excepting, perhaps, that I would not make such a hurried job of it. Yes, that *was* my mistake, but you are not to pity me on this account. For what matter a few years more or less, a few dinners more or less—aye, a few passions, more or less, the best and only permanently alluring pleasure that life can offer? The end is the same, and the end comes as surely to him who has outlived his digestion and his capacity for enjoyment as to him who, like

me, dies with every power and every appetite at the full."

For a moment I took my eyes from my Guest and looked anxiously about to assure myself that nobody was listening to this confession of the Dead. As before, we seemed not to attract any special attention. Our nearest neighbors, a man and a young woman a little the worse for wine, hardly deigned us a glance, and were certainly occupied with anything but spiritual affairs. This bit of the universal human comedy was repeated here and there about the room. Many diners had gone, and with each departure the scattered lovers seemed to take on fresh courage and confidence. The orchestra continued to play intermittently and was applauded ever the more wildly by the still lingering guests.

All this I saw in the space of less than a second or two during which my eyes had left his face.

He continued: "You have grieved too much, dear old boy, over the thought that I was cheated, or cheated myself of my due share of life. The cowards who dared not live, the weaklings whose fill of life was starvation and death to me, found a text and a moral in my

fate. Let not this be your thought, my friend, when you sit here alone in the Red Room and pledge me in old Bordeaux. Think rather that I fulfilled my life, won every prize of my desire, tasted every joy, scorned every fear, and died in the flush of victory!" . . .

As he said these last words his voice sounded like the distant note of a silver clarion. Could it be possible that he was unheard by the neighboring diners? Again I stole a fearful glance about the room.

Evidently nobody was concerned with us in the now thinned-out company. The hour was late. Leaning against the wall, at a little distance, was our waiter, quietly observant of us, as I thought, but not importunate with his attentions.

With a feeling of relief I turned again to my Visitor. *He was gone!*—but for some moments my bewilderment and stupefaction were such that I could not remove my eyes from the vacant chair where he had been seated an instant before.

I must have cried out, recovering my speech, for I awoke as from a trance to see that some near-by people were looking toward me in a

surprised fashion. In the same moment the waiter came hastily forward.

"Did Monsieur call? Is anything the matter with Monsieur?"

"No, no," I managed to articulate, my presence of mind returning at sight of those staring faces; "what should be the matter? Just bring me a pony of brandy—and the bill."

He was back in a moment with the liquor, and having figured out the bill, laid it face down on the table before me.

I tossed off the brandy, thinking that I had just had the strangest hallucination that ever sprang from a few glasses of old Bordeaux, and unable to account for it upon any theory of my previous experience, or temperament, or constitution.

Then I took up the dinner check and, surprised at the amount, called the waiter.

"Haven't you made a mistake?" I asked, indicating the charge.

"But . . . pardon!—*the other gentleman.* Monsieur is paying for two," said the waiter.

VI

SAINT MARK *

RE-ENTER the Sieur de Conte! . . . Our gallant old friend makes as knightly a show as of yore when first he rode into the lists and pledged his fealty to the stainless Maid. But alas! his hair that rivalled the rutilant mane of Mars, is now white as carded wool. Yet has that eye lost nothing of its old fire, and the years have but fetched new strength and cunning to his hand. And methinks the Sieur fights with a tempered skill and a wary shrewdness that were not always his in the old days—by my halidom, I would not care to be the Holy Council at Rome with such a champion pitted against me! For indeed the Holy Council may pow-wow as long or as short as may please their holinesses—the

* This essay was written before the Beatification of the Maid (Beatification is not Canonization), but the fact does not necessarily call for any change in what I have written. See also the article on "The Maid" in the Author's "NEW ADVENTURES."

world at the challenge of the Sieur de Conte, has awarded the crown of saintship to Joan of Arc. The living voice, the magic pen of the Sieur de Conte are worth all their musty raking from the past; are more than worth their assumed authority to decide the question. If the Holy Fathers have dropped the matter for the nonce, as rumor now declares, they have but done the thing that might have been expected of them. The Church is ever too wise to invite defeat, too polite to issue a dead-letter, too strong in its divine right to surrender on heretic compulsion. Besides, it is here to stay forever; and shall it be moved for a chit of a girl who has been dead less than five hundred years?—Tut, tut,—there is always plenty of time!

The Sieur de Conte (otherwise Mark Twain) in all that he has written on the subject, has failed to point out one extraordinary fact with regard to Joan of Arc. I am glad that he has left it to me. It is this: Since that fearful day in Rouen when she was led to her martyrdom by fire, she has been the glory of the faith and the shame of the Church. That is why she has waited so long for the formal warrant of saintship. That is why the Devil's

Advocate has so far prevailed to deny her on earth the crown she wears in Heaven.*

Do not think this a musty old question which interests only a few droning priests sitting in a back room of the Vatican, and here and there a poetic idealist like the Sieur de Conte. By no means!—it is a question as vital as the fame of the Maid herself, calling forth champions and antagonists in every age. It is a plague-sore in the side of the Church—put your finger there! It never has been settled because it never could and never can be settled to the credit of the Church. Also I believe it is bound up with the eternal question of liberty, in whose holy cause the Maid fought and suffered.

Joan of Arc was done to death by the priests and theologians of the day, urged on by the civil power in the hands of her French and English enemies. I am aware that her death is not chargeable, in a direct sense, to the Church, and it is deemed likely by Lamartine that she would have been saved, had she known enough to appeal directly to Rome. I am aware that, short of canonization, the Church has done what it could to make amends to the memory of Joan of Arc. To give her the crown of

* Joan was canonized in May, 1920.

saintship now, would not restore the credit of the Church, but would rather irreparably damage it in the eyes of the world. For the two or three hundred priests and theologians who judged the Maid, as well as the godly men of the Inquisition of Paris who damned her as a child of the Devil, were in loyal communion with the Church, and were, in fact, part of its machinery. Still, it is certain that the Church, in its true representative and executive character,* did not incur the guilt and odium of Joan's death. But the whole system arrogating divine powers and claiming the right to draw supernatural warrants, was involved in the trial and murder of the Maid; was judged by the measure with which it meted to her; and is now of a truth dead forever to the more enlightened part of mankind. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of liberty!

A certain set of apologists on behalf of the Church try to cast all the blame of Joan's persecution and death upon the English. To be sure, the English had the best right to hate her and to seek her destruction, for had she not beaten them in many battles and all but driven them out of the fair land of France, which

* *I.e.*, the central authority at Rome.

they had come to regard as their own? But let us be fair; her own countrymen shared to the full in the guilt and the shame of her death —nothing can clear them of that! Besides, we are not to forget that both French and English were in that day of the same religious faith. Not a single heretic took part in the proceedings against Joan, from the holy clerics of the Inquisition of Paris who pronounced anathema upon her, to Bishop Cauchon, that zealous prototype of Fouquier Tinville, who sought her blood openly and thirsted for it with an eager relish that shocked even his fellow judges; or the rude soldiers who kept guard *within* her cell day and night, and probably caused her as much anguish, at times, as the threat of the fire. They were all believers in the One True Faith, and the stain of her innocent blood is upon every one of them, French and English. Make no mistake about that!

Indeed, we can not go astray as to the facts, and these themselves can not be twisted to the purpose of special pleading; for the whole plan of the murder of Joan of Arc, the carefully marked steps by which it was unrelentingly carried out, the heroic but ineffectual struggles of the victim, the unspeakable devices resorted

to, in order to circumvent and destroy her, the pitiless, unhalting purpose of her prosecutors, marked as with a pencil of red,—are laid bare to us, by the sworn testimony of eye-witnesses, with a fulness of detail and a veracity of statement which leave hardly a question to be asked or a doubt to be solved. It is all there—the conspiracy of power, learning and holiness (God save the mark!) against one brave, helpless, ignorant, innocent girl. We see the suavely ferocious Cauchon pressing her with both his holy hands toward the scaffold—he was excommunicated some years afterward, but it didn't save the Church's credit. We see that formidable array of priests setting the utmost skill of their wits, the deepest resources of their cunning, against a simple country girl who could neither read nor write a name which is now one of the best known on the earth; trying by every art of casuistry to wrest or surprise from her an admission that should send her to the flames.

Let us be just: they were not all equally guilty, not all equally intent on the slaughter of the innocent lamb before them. Not one was so bad as the monster Cauchon, and to be strictly fair even to that consecrated beast, not

one had Cauchon's motive—but the fact does not save the Church's credit. Some of those priests had kind hearts and would gladly have sent the child home to her mother; but they lacked the power. Besides, they were captives themselves, bound hand and foot with the fetters of superstition and devil-born lunacy, misnamed religious fervor; daunted by monstrous ignorance, and mythic fears of Hell and darkness, chrisomed and holy-watered into a pretence of light and knowledge—aye, they were cowering slaves, branded and obedient to the lash, and she standing free and enfranchised in her chains!

Though I am perhaps the first to call attention to the matter, there are many points of likeness between the trial of Jesus Christ and the trial of Joan of Arc. They were both sold for a price of silver. Both were martyrs of liberty. Both perished through a combination of forces political and priestly. Christ had Caiaphas; Joan had Cauchon, something the worst of it. The chief accusers, the head prosecutors of each were priests, and as the Jews cried out at the trial of Jesus, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!"—so might the priests have cried out at the condemnation

of Joan, "Her blood be upon us and upon the Church!" It is there yet—the excommunication of Cauchon and the reversal of the Judgment have not removed it. Something more will have to be done ere that Great Wrong can be righted.

But having shown the great similarity marking the trials of Jesus Christ and Joan of Arc, I now wish to call attention to a most striking point of unlikeness, which is even more suggestive than the resemblance shown. It is this: among the judges of Joan of Arc—priests as they were or deemed themselves to be, of the Christ of love and mercy—there was none so merciful as Pontius Pilate, whose memory is not held in much honor by the Christian world; not one had the courage or the humanity to wash his hands of the intended murder. Some desired it out of their blind ignorance and cruel fanaticism; many no doubt regretted it, as a severe but salutary act of faith; all consented to it! The responsibility is thus landed squarely where it belongs, on the official religion which was then in league with the secular arm. If there had been the least available doubt as to that—if the damning record were not in black and white, attested by the solemn

oaths of so many witnesses of or participants in the trial—the Church would long ago, for her own credit, have granted the saintship of Joan of Arc, and to-day the altars of the Maid of Orleans would flame in a hundred lands. But perhaps, since the Eternal Church does not count years as men count them, it is yet some ages too soon to raise an altar to the Second Great Martyr of Liberty. And maybe this is a fortunate thing for Liberty and the Maid, for on the day that the Church makes Joan of Arc wholly her own, on that day she will step down from the unexampled place she has so long held in the love and pity and worship of mankind.* Such a consummation would not, I am sure, be agreeable to her leal knight and devoted champion, the Sieur de Conte Mark Twain.

. . . . . .

IN the wide court of Heaven, on any of these fine days, you may see—if God has given you sight above your eyes—a Maid who has been a maiden now during full five hundred

* It would be a nice question to decide how much of the world-wide sentiment of affection and veneration for Joan is due to the fact that she has always been regarded as a victim of the Church.

years. Her hair is the color of the corn-silk at harvest-time, and her eyes of the early for-get-me-not. She is slender as of old when, clad in shining armor and mounted on her milk-white steed, she led the long dispirited warriors of France to victory, or upheld her wondrous standard at the coronation of her King. Often she may be seen leaning over the crystal battlements, chin on hand and looking down with pensive gaze on France, and Orleans, and Domremy, and Rouen whence her soul, like a white dove, ascended in the flame of her country's cruel ingratitude.

But sometimes she turns her glance from scenes like these, charged with sweet and terrible memories, and looks down with loving intentness toward a certain spot on earth where an old white-haired man raises eyes of love and almost worship to hers. They see and salute each other—oh, be sure of that! The old man was many years younger when they first became acquainted, but the Maid is always the same age, for they grow no older in Heaven. Who shall explain the spell (since the Sieur de Conte will not confess his dreams) that has joined in a perfect love and understanding these two children of Nature, separated by the dif-

ference of race and the shoreless gulf of five hundred years? Who can but wonder at the enchanting touch of a white hand from out the past which has turned the bold scoffer and jeerer, the wild man of the river and the mining camps, into such a knight as was rarely seen in the most gracious days of chivalry? And to see him now, when he should be taking the rest he has so gloriously earned, still eager to battle in her cause, daring the world to the onset, fighting for her with the passionate heart of youth, pleading for her with a burning zeal, as if in the five centuries that have rolled away since her death no other cause worthy to be named with hers has appealed to the award of sword or pen—to see this rightly and with eyes cleared for the perception of that Truth which is the only thing really precious in the world, is to rejoice at the finest spectacle that has been given to the wondering eyes of men in our day.

Whether the brave old knight will yet win the whole world over to her side, I can not say, though I think he will, if he be given time enough; but, at any rate, he has already made sure of all kind and feeling hearts. I believe his devotion to Joan of Arc is the finest and

most ideal poem of our age—an age, to be sure, which has known too little poetry, and which has never thought of looking to the Sieur de Conte to supply it. And I believe, further, that the Book of the Ideal contains the story of no love more pure and beautiful than this which unites the Old Man and the Maid.*

* This essay (entitled "Saint Mark") was first published in the *Papyrus* in 1904, and drew from our glorious Mark Twain the following:

"It is strong and eloquent and beautiful. The inspiration which tipped your pen with fire is from the Maid. After all these centuries that force still lives—lives and grows, I think.

"I was struck by a remark of yours (and I agree with it) that from the day of the martyrdom the Maid has been the 'glory of the faith and the shame of the Church.'

"I was hoping she would never be canonized. One doesn't build monuments to Adam: he is a monument himself."

VII

THE POET'S ATONEMENT

IT HARDLY seems a decade since the disgrace, the trial and sentence of Oscar Wilde. His death followed so close upon his punishment as to give the deepest tragic value to the lesson of his fall. There was in truth nothing left him to do but die, after he had penned the most poignantly pathetic poem and the most strangely moving confession (which is yet a subtle vindication) that have been given to the world since the noon of Byron's fame.

Until the present hour * the world has withheld its pity from that tragedy, as complete in all its features as the Greek conscience would have exacted,—and Oscar Wilde has stood beyond the pale of human sympathy. Only seemed to stand, however, for there are many signs of the reaction, the better judgment which never delays long behind the severest condem-

* First published about 1906.

nation of the public voice when, as in this case, the circumstances justify an appeal to the higher mercy and humanity.

Socially, Oscar Wilde was executed, and for a brief time it seemed as if his name would stand only in the calendar of the infamous. But men presently remembered that he was a genius, a literary artist of almost unique distinction among English writers, a wit whose talent for paradox and delicately perverse fancy had yielded the world a pure treasure of delight. In the first hue-and-cry of his disgrace, the British public—and to a large extent, the American public also—had taken up moral cudgels not merely against the man himself, but against the writer. His plays were withdrawn from the theatres, his writings from the libraries and bookstalls, and his name was anathema wherever British respectability wields its leaden mace. But though you can pass sentence of social death upon a man, you can not execute a Book! You can not lay your hangman's hands upon an Idea, and all the edicts of Philistinism are powerless against it. For true genius is the rarest and most precious thing in the world, and God has wisely ordained that the malice or stupidity of men shall not destroy

it. And this the world sees to be just, when it has had time to weigh the matter, as in the present instance.

Oscar Wilde went to his prison with the burden of such shame and reprobation as has never been laid upon a literary man of equal eminence. Not a voice was raised for him—the starkness of his guilt silenced even his closest friends and warmest admirers. The world at large approved of his punishment. That small portion of the world which is loth to see the suffering of any sinner, was revolted by the nature of his offence and turned away without a word; the sin of Oscar Wilde claimed no charity and permitted of no discussion. Had his crime been murder itself, his fame and genius would have raised up defenders on every hand. As it was, all mouths were stopped, and the man went broken-hearted to his doom.

But while his body lay in prison, the children of his mind pleaded for him, and such is the invincible appeal of genius, the heart of the world began to be troubled in despite of itself. His books came slowly forth from their hiding-places; his name was restored here and there to a catalogue; a little emotion of pity was awakened in his favor. Then from his prison

cell arose a cry of soul-anguish, of utter pathos, of supreme expiation, which stirred the heart of pity to its depths. The feigner was at last believed when the world had made sure of the accents of his agony and could put its finger in each of his wounds. Society had sentenced this poet: the poet both sentenced and forgave society, in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", thus achieving the most original paradox of his fantastic genius and throwing about his shame something of the halo of martyrdom. He did more than this, in the judgment of his fellow artists—he purchased his redemption and snatched his name from the mire of infamy into which it had been cast. Strange how the world applauded the triumphant genius which only a little while before it had condemned to ignominy and silence!

II

THE utter and incredible completeness of Wilde's disgrace satisfies the artistic sense, which is never content with half-results. We know that it afforded this kind of satisfaction to the victim himself, exigent of artistic effects even in his catastrophe—and the proof of it is "De Profundis". This book will take

rank with the really memorable human documents. It is a true cry of the heart, a sincere utterance of the spiritual depths of this man's nature, when the angels of sorrow had troubled the pool. The only thing that seems to militate against its acceptance as such, is the unfailing presence of that consummate literary art, too conscious of itself, which, as in all the author's work save "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", draws us constantly from the substance to the form. Many persons of critical acumen say they can not see the penitent for the artist. The texture of the sackcloth is too exquisitely wrought and too manifestly of the loom that gave us "Dorian Gray", "Salome", and the rest. How could a man stricken unto death with grief and shame so occupy himself with the vanity of style,—a dilettante even in the hour when fate was crushing him with its heaviest blows? Does not this wonderful piece of work, lambent with all the rays of his lawless genius, show the artificial core of the man as nothing that even he ever did before? And what is the spiritual value of a "confession" which is so obviously a literary *tour de force;* in which the plain and the simple are

avoided with the "precious", lapidary art of a prince of decadents?

So say, or seem to say, the critics. For myself, I can accept as authentic Wilde's testament of sorrow, even though it be written in a style which often dazzles with beauty, surprises with paradox, and sometimes intoxicates with the rapture of the inevitable artist. He could not teach his hand to unlearn its cunning, strive as he might. Like Narcissus wondering at his own beauty in the fountain, no sooner had he begun to tell the tale of his sorrow than the loveliness of his words seized upon him, and the sorrow that found such expression seemed a thing almost to be desired.

So when Oscar Wilde took up the pen in his prison solitude to make men weep, he did that indeed, but too soon he delighted them as of yore. Art, his adored mistress, whispered her thrilling consolations to the poor castaway—they had taken all from him—liberty, honor, wealth, fame, mother, wife, children, and shut him up in an iron hell, but by God! they should not take *her!* With this little pen in hand they were all under his feet,—solemn judge, stolid jury, the beast of many heads, and the whited British Philistia. Let them come on now!—

But soft, the poet's anger is gone in a moment, for Beauty, faithful to one who had loved her t'other side o' madness, comes and fills his narrow cell with her adorable presence, bringing the glory of the sweet world he has lost,—the breath of dawn, the scented hush of summer nights, the peace of April rains, the pageant of the Autumn lands, the changeful wonder of the sea. Imagination brushes away his bounds of stone and steel to give him all her largess of the past; gracious figures of poesy and romance known and loved from his sinless youth (the man is always an artist, but you see! he can weep); the elect company of classic ages to whom his soul does reverence and who seem not to scorn him; the fair heroines of immortal story who in the old days, as his dreams so often told him, had deemed him worthy of their love—he would kneel at their white feet now, but their sweet glances carry no rebuke; the kind poets, his beloved masters in Apollo, who bend upon him no alienated gaze; the heroes, the sages who had inspired his boyish heart, the sceptred and mighty sons of genius who had roused in him a passion for fame—all come thronging at the summons of memory and fancy—a far dearer and better world than that

which had denied, cursed and condemned him, and which he was to know no more.

Then, last of all, when these fair and noble guests were gone, and the glow of their visitation had died out into the old bitter loneliness and sorrow, there came One whose smile had the brightness of the sun and the seven stars. And the poor prisoner of sin cast himself down at the feet of the Presence, as unworthy to look upon that divine radiancy, and the fountains of his heart were broken up as never before. Yet in his weeping he heard a Voice which said, "Thy sin and sorrow are equal, and thou hast still but a little way to go. Come!"

Then rose up the sinner and fared forth of the spirit with Christ to Emmaus. . . .

And men will yet say that the words which the sinner wrote of that Vision have saved his soul (which not long thereafter was demanded of him) and sweetened his fame forever. But the critics who forget the adjuration, "Judge not lest ye be judged", cry out that the sinner is never to be trusted in these matters, because he writes so well! God, however, is kinder than men or critics. He will forgive the poor poet, in spite of his beautiful style.

VIII

CHILDREN OF THE AGE

I HAVE been reading the "Last Letters of Aubrey Beardsley". A strange book, full of a sort of macabre interest. Not really a book, and yet peculiarly suggestive as an end-of-the-century document. The soul of Beardsley here exposed with a kind of abnormal frankness that somehow recalls the very style of art by which he shocked and captured the world's regard. And the obvious purpose of it all, to show how he attained peace of the spirit and a quiet grave in his early manhood.

Poor Beardsley was bitten deep with the malady of his age—he ranks with the most interesting, though not, of course, the greatest of its victims. He died under thirty, and his name is known to thousands who know nothing of his art nor perhaps of any art whatever. To very many his name stands as a symbol of degeneracy. There is an intimate legend which attaints him with the scarlet sins of the newer

hedonism. He is closely associated in the public mind with the most tragically disgraced literary man of modern times. In art he was a lawless genius, but a genius for all that, else the world would not have heard so much of him. The fact that counts is, that in a very brief life he did much striking work, and for a time, at least, gave his name to a school of imitators. Whether his artistic influence was for good or evil, does not matter in this view of him—let the professors haggle about that. What does matter is the fact and sum of his accomplishment, which justifies the continued interest in his name.

One naturally associates with Beardsley other ill-fated victims of the age, such as Maupassant, Bastien Lepage, Marie Bashkirtseff, Oscar Wilde, Ernest Dowson,—to cite no more. They were all martyrs of their own talent, and martyrs also of that ravaging malady of the heart, that devouring casuistry, so peculiar to the last quarter of the Nineteenth century. We may be sure the disease was not confined to a few persons of extraordinary talent—of them we heard only because of their position in the public mind, and also because, as artists, they were bound to reveal their suf-

ferings. Nay, we were the more keenly interested in their painful confessions, knowing that they spoke for many condemned to bear their agonies in silence. For the world will soon turn away from an isolated sufferer, as from a freak on the operating table—let it fear or recognize the disease for its own and it will never weary of seeing and hearing. This commonplace truth explains, I think, the great and continuing interest which the persons above named have excited.

All of these were unusually gifted, whether as artists or writers, and all strove to fulfill their talents with an almost suicidal fury of application. It seemed as if each had a prescience of early death and labored with fatal devotion that the world might not lose the fruit which was his to give. Generous sacrifice, which never fails to mark the rarest type of genius. Maupassant, perhaps the most gifted, the most terribly in earnest of all, went to work like a demoniac, pouring forth a whole literature of plays, poems, stories, romances, all in the space of ten years. Such fecundity, coupled with an artistic practice so admirable and a literary conscience so exacting, was perhaps never before witnessed in the same writer. But the

world presently learned a greater wonder still —that this unwearied artist had, in those ten years of apparently unremitting labor, lived a life that was not less full of romance, of passion, of variety and excitement than the creations of his brain. He had accomplished, as it were, a twofold suicide—in life and in art.

Maupassant died mad, his brain worn out by constant production, his heart torn by the malady of his age, which we can trace in so many pages of his work. But at least he died without disgrace, and in this respect his fate was far happier than that of Oscar Wilde, his contemporary and equal in genius, whose brilliant career closed in the darkest infamy. Poor Wilde sinned greatly no doubt,—the English courts settled that,—though his atonement was of a piece with his offending. The man dies, but the artist lives; and Wilde has work to his credit which will long survive the memory of his tragic shame.

In his last wretched days Wilde turned for consolation to the Catholic Church, which, with a deeper knowledge of human nature than her rivals can understand, still makes the worst sinner, if repentant, her peculiar care. Wilde became a Catholic, and he recorded that had he

but done so years before, the world would not have been shocked by the story of his disgrace. This is less a truism than a confession. At any rate, one is not sorry to know that the poor, broken-hearted wretch found sanctuary at the last, and died in that divine hope which he has voiced in the noblest of his poems.

Like Wilde, Beardsley became a Catholic at the last when he was under sentence of death from consumption, and the "Letters" are addressed to a worthy Catholic priest who instructed him in the faith. Beardsley was of versatile talents, but he could not fairly be called a writer, and these letters were obviously written in perfect candor and with no thought of their ever meeting any eyes save the good priest's for which they were intended. All the same they are, as I have already said, curiously interesting, and they do not lack touches of genuine insight and emotion. The fantastic artist grew very sober in the shadow of death, and the riot of sensuality in which his genius had formerly delighted, was clean wiped from his brain. Wilde himself, in his last days of grace, might have penned this sentence:

"If Heine is the great warning, Pascal is the great example to all artists and thinkers. He

understood that to become a Christian the man of letters must sacrifice his gifts, just as Magdalen sacrificed her beauty."

Strange language this, from an end-of-the-century decadent, whose achievement in art was that he had carried to an extreme the suggestions of the wildest sensualism. But perhaps it was not the same Beardsley who made the pictures to "Salome" and who, through the most original, creative part of his career, worked like a man in the frenzy of satyriasis. No, it was not the same Beardsley—the sentence of premature death had turned Pan into a St. Anthony.

Not long after penning the words I have quoted, Beardsley made a sacrifice of his gifts and was received into the Catholic Church. Within a year thereafter he died. There is nothing to mar the moral of his conversion and edifying change of heart, except the reflection that, like so many other eleventh-hour penitents, he put off making a sacrifice of his gifts until he had no further use for them. And at last, one can't help thinking that if Beardsley had not made some fearfully immoral pictures, this book, with the highly moral story of his

conversion, would not have been put before the world. . . .

I have mentioned Ernest Dowson, a minor poet, the singer of a few exquisite songs. Less talented than the others, yet a true child of the age and stricken at the heart with the same malady, Dowson owes his fame more to the memorial written by his friend and brother poet, Arthur Symons, than to his own work, which in bulk is of the slightest. His short life was frightfully dissolute—Symons speaks of his drunkenness with a kind of awe. It was not an occasional over-indulgence with comrades of his own stamp, passing the bottle too often while their heads grew hot and their tongues loosened; it was not the solitary, sodden boozing to which many hopeless drunkards are addicted. For weeks at a stretch Dowson would give himself up to a debauch with the refuse of the London slums, and during that time he would seem an utterly different being, with scarcely a hint of his normal self. I wish some one would explain how this brutal sottishness can co-exist with the most delicate intellectual sensibility, with the poet-soul. We have had many explanations of the puzzle, and they have only one fault—they do not explain.

Dowson left us little, not because he drank much, but because he could rarely satisfy his own taste, which kept him as unhappy in a literary sense as his conscience did in a religious one. He wrote some fine sonnets to a young woman whose mother kept a cheap eating-house:—she married the waiter. The genius of Beardsley could alone have done justice to this grotesque anti-climax.

Like Beardsley, Dowson died a Catholic—he had barely passed thirty—but unlike Beardsley, he had expected to do so all his life, for he was born in the faith. Yet the faith had not saved him from *le mal du siècle,* nor had it kept him from the foul pit of debauchery. What it did—and this was much—was to give him a hope at the end. . . .

Oh, sad children of the age, why wait so long before coming to your Mother, the ancient Church? She alone can heal your cruel wounds, self-inflicted, and bind up your bleeding hearts. She alone can succor you; she alone can give your troubled spirit rest and quiet those restless brains that would be asking, asking unto madness. See!—she has balsam and wine for your wayfaring in this world, and

something that will fortify you for a longer journey. Hear ye the bells calling the happy faithful who have never known the hell of doubt; hear ye the organ pealing forth its jubilation over the Eternal Sacrifice! Come into the great House of God, founded in the faith, strong with the strength, sanctified by the prayer, and warm with the hope of nineteen hundred years. Come, make here at the altar a sacrifice of your poor human gifts, and exchange them for undying treasures. Painter, for your bits of canvas, the glories of heaven; poet, for your best rhyme the songs of the saved. Come, though it be not until the last hour—yet come, come, even then! . . .

Whether the old Church can really give what she promises, I know not, but sure am I that men will go on believing to the end. For faith is ever more attractive than unfaith, and human nature craves a comfortable heaven; and, after all, it takes more courage to die in the new scientific theory of things than in the simple belief of the saints. And alas! the cold affirmations of science can not cure nor genius itself satisfy the stricken children of the age.

IX

THE BLACK FRIAR

Beware! beware! of the Black Friar
Who sitteth by Norman stone,
For he mutters his prayer in the midnight air,
And his mass of the days that are gone.

* * *

And whether for good or whether for ill
It is not mine to say,
But still to the house of Amundeville
He abideth night and day.

—Don Juan

ONE may wonder what my Lord Byron in the shades thinks of his noble grandson's performance in summoning the obscene Furies to a final desecration of his grave. Surely the ghouls of scandal that find their congenial food in the shrouds of the illustrious dead, have never had richer quarry. True, they have already had their noses at the scent (through the sweet offices of an American authoress),* and have even picked a little

* Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose book "Lady Byron Vindicated" made so great a sensation nearly fifty years ago, and is now all but forgotten. Mrs. Stowe's posthumous hanging

at the carrion; but the full body-of-death was never before delivered to them.

This point has been clouded over in the public discussion of the infamy. It should be made clear in order that the Earl of Lovelace may receive his due credit. Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's revelations were, of course, to the same purport, but they were based on the unsupported word of Lady Byron and some very free readings of certain passages in the poet's works. Everybody was shocked, nobody convinced. Mrs. Stowe's book was damned by universal consent and withdrawn from public sale.

Lord Lovelace has about the same story to tell, and his revival of the horrid scandal would go for naught, were it not that he is himself a kind of witness against the dead. It would be foolish to deny that many people will as such accept him. There is nobody now living to share or dispute his preëminence in shame. Lord Lovelace should have a portion, at least, of the burden of Orestes. . . .

Yes, there are terrible things in this darkly perplexed drama of the house of Byron, which

of Byron in chains was strongly disrelished by the English-reading public. One does not easily pick up a copy of her book.

make it seem like a modern version of the old Greek tragedy. Look at the figures in it. A great poet—among the very greatest of his race—beautiful as a god, born to the highest place, the spoiled darling of nature and of fortune, dazzling the world with his gifts, drunk himself with excess of power, crowding such emotion and enthusiasm, such vitality and passion, such adventure and achievement, such a fulness of productive power within the short span of a life cut off in its prime, as have scarcely ever marked the career of another human being. Never have men's eyes wonderingly followed so splendid and lawless a comet in the sky of fame. Never was man loved more passionately, hated more bitterly, admired more extravagantly, praised more wildly, damned more deeply. His quarrel divided the world into armed camps which still maintain their hostile lines. He was the Napoleon * of the intellectual world and bulked as large as the Corsican, with whom indeed he shared the admiration of Europe. And by

* Byron scandalized the England of his day by his great and (as it was then regarded) disloyal admiration for Napoleon. The text is justified by his famous boast in "Don Juan". "Even I myself", he says—

Was reckoned a considerable time
The Grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.

Europe he was acclaimed and almost deified when England had first exiled and later denied him a place in the pantheon of her great.

Never, too, were great faults redeemed by grander virtues, worthy of his towering genius —virtues to which the eyes of those who loved him still turned with shining hope after each brief eclipse of his nobler self, as when the sudden summer storm has passed over, men seek the sun. Virtues which drew the hatred of his race and caste, and have left his name as a sword and a burning brand in the world.

Such is the chief actor in this terrible and sinister drama which has lately been unveiled by the perfidy of the heir of his blood—the son of that "Ada" whom his verse has immortalized. The remaining characters are few, which is also fatally in accordance with the rules of Greek tragedy. For the most tremendous dramas of the flesh and the spirit do not ask a crowd of performers; two or three persons will suffice and the eternal elements of love and hate.

So here we have, besides the poet, only the unloved and unloving wife, who meekly discharged her bosom of its long-festering rancor ere she left the world; the beloved—perhaps

too wildly beloved—half-sister of the poet, whose memory (in spite of the hideous calumny laid upon her) is like a springing fountain of bright water in the hot desert of his life; * and, lastly, the evil grandson in whom the ancestral curses of the house of Byron have found a terribly fit medium of execution and vengeance. It seems a circumstance of added horror that this parricidal slanderer should be a hoary old man, while the world can not imagine Byron save as he died, in the glory and beauty of youth.

What madness possessed the man? Was it perhaps the hoarded rage and bitterness of many years, that he should have been compelled to live his long life without fame or notice, in the shadow of a mighty name? A wild enough theory, but such extraordinary madness as my Lord Lovelace's will not allow of sane conjecture. One does not pick and choose his hypotheses in Bedlam.

That my Lord Lovelace is mad doth sufficiently, indeed overwhelmingly, appear from

* In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.
[Byron to his sister.]

his part in this shameful and lamentable business; but, as often happens in cases of reasoning dementia, the truth comes out rather in some petty detail than in the general conduct. Thus, at the outset, he orders his charges very well and maintains a semblance of dignity that would befit a worthier matter. One is, passingly, almost tempted to believe that the noble lord has been moved to the shocking enterprise by a compelling sense of moral and even filial obligation. He seems to speak more in sorrow than in anger and comes near to winning our sympathy, if not our approval. This at the threshold of his plea But his malignity soon reveals itself, horrifying and disgusting us, and suddenly the detail crops up—the *little thing* for which intelligent alienists are always on the alert—and losing all control, he abandons himself to the utter freedom of his hatred and his madness. I refer now to the atrocious passage in his book in which he exults over the alleged fact revealed by the post-mortem examination of Byron's remains—*that the poet's heart was found to be partly petrified or turned into stone!*

A pretty bauble this to play with! There are saner men than my Lord Lovelace trying

to seize the moon through their grated windows, and coming very near to doing it—oh, very near!

But I should like to have a look at my Lord Lovelace's heart! . . .

Lovers of Byron's fame may be glad, at least, that the worst has now been said and calumny can not touch the great poet further. Ever since his death nearly a hundred years ago,* the hyenas of scandal have wrangled over his grave, shocking the world in their hunt for uncleanness. All the nameless things that delight to see greatness brought low, genius disgraced, the sanctuary of honor defiled and the virtue of humanity trampled in the dirt, were bidden to the feast. Those obscene orgies have lasted a long time: they are now at an end. The unclean have taken away the uncleanness, if such there was, and are dispersed with their foul kindred in the wilderness. The clean remains, and all that was truly vital and imperishable of Byron—the legacy of his genius, the inspiration of his example in the cause of liberty, the deathless testimony of his spirit for that supreme cause, and his flame-

* Byron died in 1824.

hearted protest against the enthroned Sham, Meanness and Oppression which still rule the world. These precious bequests of Byron we have immortal and secure. As for the rest—

Glory without end
Scattered the clouds away, and on that name attend
The tears and praises of all time!

X

LAFCADIO HEARN

HAS the Silence fallen upon thee, O Lafcadio, in that far Eastern land of strange flowers, strange gods and myths, where thou, grown weary of a world whence the spirit of romance had flown, didst fix thy later home? Art thou indeed gone forever from us who loved thee, being of thy brave faith in the divinity of the human spirit, and art thou gathered to a strange Valhalla of thy wiser choice,—naturalized now, as we may of a truth believe, among the elect and heroic shades of old Japan? Is that voice stilled which had not its peer in these lamentable days, sounding the gamut of beauty and joy that has almost ceased to thrill the souls of men? Child of Hellas and Erin, are those half-veiled eyes, that yet saw so deeply into the spiritual Mystery that enfolds our sensuous life, forever closed to this earthly scene? Hath Beauty lost her chief witness and the

Lyre of Prose her anointed bard and sacerdos? Shall we no more hearken to the cadences of that perfect speech which was thy birthright, sprung as thou wert from the poesy of two immemorial lands, sacred to eloquence and song? . . .

Ill shall we bear thy loss, O Lafcadio, given over as we are to the rule and worship of leaden gods. Thou wert for us a witness against the iron Law that crushed, and ever crushes, our lives; against the man-made superstition which impudently seeks to limit the Ideal. From beyond the violet seas, in thy flower-crowned retreat, thou didst raise the joyous pæan of the Enfranchised. Plunged deep into mystic lore hidden from us, exploring a whole realm of myths and worships of which our vain science knows nothing, thou wouldst smile with gentle scorn at the monstrous treadmill of creeds and cultures—gods and words—where we are forever doomed to toil without fruit or respite.

We hearkened to thy wondrous tales of a land whose babes have more of the spirit of Art than the teachers of our own; where love is free, yet honored and decency does not consist in doing that privately which publicly no

man dare avow; where religion, in our sophistical sense, does not exist, and where crime, again in our brutal sense, is all but unknown. We heard thee tell, with ever more wonder, how this people of Japan has gone on for hundreds, nay, thousands of years, producing the humblest as well as the highest virtues without the aid of an officious religion; how these Japanese folk have the wisdom of age and the simplicity of childhood, being simple and happy, loving peace, contented with little, respectful toward the old, tender toward the young, merciful toward women, submissive under just authority, and loving their beautiful country with a fervor of patriotism which we may not conceive.*

All this and more didst thou teach us, Lafcadio, in the way of thy gracious art, with many an exquisite fancy caught from the legendary lore of ancient Nippon, and with the ripe fulness of thy strangely blended genius. So we listened as to a far-brought strain of

* This was written shortly after the death of Hearn in 1905. Elsewhere I have noted (*vide* "NEW ADVENTURES") that in his later years Hearn experienced a certain disillusionment in regard to the Japanese. It appears from his letters that as his exile lengthened he felt the prose of the East more than the poetry; while to the very end he resented the Occidentalizing process at work in Japan.

music, and were glad to hear, hailing thee Master—a title thou hadst proudly earned. Yet even as we sat at thy feet drinking in the tones of thy voice, there came One who touched thee quickly on the lips—and we knew the rest was Silence. . . .

Peace to thee, Lafcadio, child of Erin and Hellas, adopted son and poet of Nippon. Thy immortality is sure as the dayspring; for thou sleepest in the Land of the Sunrise . . . and Nippon, who has never learned to forget, watches over thy fame!

II

LAFCADIO HEARN was a poet working in prose, as all true poets now inevitably are, a literary artist of original motive and distinction among the rabble of contemporary scribblers. For these two things a man is not easily forgiven or forgotten when he has passed the Styx.

Half Irish, half Greek, the flower of this man's genius took unwonted hue and fragrance from his strangely blended paternity; the hybrid acquired a beauty new and surprising in a world that looks only for the stereotype.

Despairing of the tame effects produced by regularity, Nature herself seems to have set an example of lawlessness.

Lafcadio Hearn took care to avoid the conventional in the ordering of his life as sedulously as in the products of his brain. For this, the man being now dead and silent, the conventional takes a familiar revenge upon his memory.

The conventional—lest we forget—is the consensus of smug souls, the taboo uttered by mediocrity, the Latin *invidia* whereat Flaccus flickered, with all his assurance. It has much the same voice in every age.

Notwithstanding, one plain fact, avouched by all human experience, may reassure the wide-scattered fraternity of those who prize the work and cherish the memory of Lafcadio Hearn. It is this:—*No man ever succeeded in writing himself down better or worse than he really was.* You may write, but the condition is that you make a faithful likeness of yourself —nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice.

The true Lafcadio Hearn, the shy, pitiably myopic genius nursed on tears, the dreamer of strange dreams, the prose poet of a new dower

of fancy, the weaver of hitherto unwrought cadences for the inner ear, the latest brave worshipper of truth and beauty,—where shall we look for him but in his enduring work?—soul and man to the essential life!

I have been re-reading the work of Hearn, and an old conviction of mine is thus reaffirmed,—that in him we have to reckon with one of the few men of the Nineteenth century who made literature that promises to endure.

The "Life and Letters" by Elizabeth Bisland is a worthy piece of literary craftsmanship. The appreciation of Hearn both as man and artist is suffused with the warmth and color of a generous woman's temperament. More critical and tempered estimates will be written, as time goes by and he comes into his own, but none that can ever supersede Elizabeth Bisland's charming work. She has done well for her friend throughout, but her care in gathering and presenting the Letters is really a priceless service to his memory and an addition to the treasures of literature.

Hearn was often doubtful of his blessings, and there was one which he perhaps never justly estimated. I mean his relation to a small but interested circle of friends for whom he

was moved to pour himself out with the frankness and force that characterize his letters. Mind, I do not say that Hearn failed to appreciate his friends, but I suspect that he did not fully realize his blessedness in having a few friends whom he found a real pleasure in writing to, and who challenged him, as it were, to the fullest self-revelation.

Literary men nowadays are too self-conscious to write good letters, or they lack the talent (which is perhaps nearer the mark), or they prefer to telegraph, or they wish to save all for the shop. But we must not forget that it takes two to write a *real* letter—one to summon and one to send it. In very truth, such letters as give the world delight are a real collaboration, though the work be signed by only one hand.

We should not have Lamb's Letters (choicest of all the epistolary tribe) but for Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Procter, Manning, Cary, *et al.;* and we should not have Hearn's but for Miss Bisland and Messrs. McDonald, Chamberlain, Krehbiel, Hendrick, and others.

Moreover, if the credit of authorship is but for the hand that held the pen, there is honor and remembrance for the silent collaborators.

I doubt if Hearn ever thought of his letters as a literary asset, yet they are being eagerly read by many who are incapable of the delicate esoteric beauty of his Japanese creations. The reason is plain: Hearn's letters tell the most fascinating story in the world. The story of a man of true genius who fought a brave fight through long years against poverty, half-blindness, and all the misfortunes of an untoward fate, until he finally achieved some image of the Ideal that haunted him, and set his light on a hill where all the world might see it. The story, too, of a man who never took himself as a hero, nor asked to be taken as such, but made his hard course as pluckily as if the world's applause attended him. Who was never at pains to make himself out different from what he was, but gave a true likeness which, by the grace and fortune of genius, turns out to be an incomparable Portrait of a Man!

These letters of Hearn are, in truth, hardly inferior to any in our literature. I am not sure but that they give us the most interesting and faithful picture of a true literary man's life, of his soul and his environment, that literature affords. Like Lamb's letters, they complement

his formal literary work, and are even superior to it on several counts, as in their deep human interest, their flashing fun and satire, their touches of quaint wisdom, their treasures of patient observation.

III

THESE ten or a dozen handsome volumes, then, represent the literary bequest of Lafcadio Hearn: it was to give these that he lived and toiled and suffered. "Give" is the word, for little enough he got from them in the way of compensation. No writer ever more fully exemplified the truth that the highest service in literature goes unpaid. Compensation of a kind there was indeed for Lafcadio Hearn,—the compensation that arises from the doing of one's chosen work, the fulfilment of one's artistic instinct, the gratification of that craving need of expression which is at once the joy and penalty of such a nature as his. But of money, or success in the common acceptation, there was so little for him that he may truly be said to have given all his work for art's sake. In 1903, with less than two years to live,

we find him writing to Mrs. Wetmore (Elizabeth Bisland):

"Literary work is over. When one has to meet the riddle of how to live, there is an end of revery and dreaming and all literary 'labor-of-love.' It pays not at all. A book brings me in about $300—after two years' waiting. My last payment on four books (for six months) was $44. Also, in my case, good work is a matter of nervous condition. I can't find the conditions while having to think about home, which is 'the most soul-satisfying of fears,' according to Rudyard Kipling."

But all his life he had been dedicate to the stern muses of Poverty and Labor. Utterly incapable of business and bargain-making—("the moment I think of business," he says, "I wish I had never been born")—he could not peddle his precious mental wares to advantage, and so abandoned everything to the shrewd bargainers of the publishing trade,—glad to do it, too, if they would only let him correct his proofs! This is the recurrent note in his private, unreserved correspondence. In 1899 he writes to one of his best friends, whom he chose as his literary executor, Paymaster Mitchell McDonald of the United States Navy, stationed then at Yokohama:

"Don't know whether I shall appear in print again for several years. Anyhow, I shall never write again except when the spirit moves me. It doesn't pay, and what you call 'reputation' is a most damnable, infernal, unmitigated misery and humbug. . . . While every book I write *costs me more than I get for it,* it is evident that literature holds no possible rewards for me; and like a sensible person, I'm going to do *something really good that won't sell.*"

Let us look a little at the artist. I have heretofore set down my own appreciation of Lafcadio Hearn as thinker and writer: my purpose now is merely to indicate by extracts from his letters the considerations by which his artistic conscience was quickened and governed. Hardly any writer has expressed himself more frankly and with less reserve on the self-imposed canons of his art. Not Flaubert himself held a more rigorous conception of the function and obligation of the writer—the priestship of art—than this man who advised one of his correspondents, a young man debating the choice of literature as a profession, *to take literature seriously or leave it alone!*

How seriously he took it himself, we have already seen, and the following extracts

gleaned at hazard from his letters help us the better to understand:

"All the best work is done the way ants do things—by tiny but untiring and regular additions."

* * *

"Work with me is a pain—no pleasure till it is done. It is not voluntary; it is not agreeable. It is forced by necessity. The necessity is a curious one. The mind, in my case, eats itself when unemployed."

* * *

"I write page after page of vagaries, metaphysical, emotional, romantic,—throw them aside. Then, next day, I go to work rewriting them. I rewrite and rewrite them till they begin to define and arrange themselves into a whole,—and the result is an essay."

* * *

"Of course, I like a little success and praise, —though a big success and big praise would scare me; and I find that even the little praise I have been getting has occasionally unhinged my judgment. And I have to be very careful."

And hearken to this, O ye impatient acolytes in the Temple of Literature, who dream only of golden rewards, and ye others, bold traffickers in a debased art, who measure achievement by its money price in the market.

"Literary success of any enduring kind is made only by refusing to do what publishers want, by refusing to write what the public wants, by refusing to accept any popular standard, by refusing to write anything to order."

* * *

"I am going to ask you simply *not* to come to see your friend, and *not* to ask him to see you, for *at least three months more.* I know this seems horrid—but such are the only conditions upon which literary work is possible, when combined with the duties of a professor of literature."

And this, than which even the letters of Lamb yield nothing finer:

"My friends are much more dangerous than my enemies. These latter—with infinite subtlety—spin webs to keep me out of places where I hate to go,—and tell stories of me to people whom it would be vanity and vexation to meet; and they help me so much by their unconscious aid that I almost love them. They help me to maintain the isolation indispensable to quiet regularity of work. . . . Blessed be my enemies, and forever honored all those that hate me!

"But my friends!—ah, my friends! They speak so beautifully of my work; they *believe* in it; they say they want more of it,—and yet they would destroy it! They do not know

what it costs,—and they would break the wings and scatter the feather-dust, even as the child that only wanted to caress the butterfly. And they speak of communion and converse and sympathy and friendship,—all of which are indeed precious things to others, but mortally deadly to me, representing the breaking up of habits of industry, and the sin of disobedience to the Holy Ghost,—against whom sin shall not be forgiven, either in this life or the life to come."

* * *

"The strong worker and thinker works and thinks by himself. He does not want help or sympathy or company. His pleasure in the work is enough."

* * *

"One thing is dead sure: in another generation there can be no living by dreaming and scheming of art; only those having wealth can indulge in the luxury of writing books for their own pleasure."

Hearn's philosophy of life, the daily human habit of the man, as revealed in these letters to a few chosen friends, is not less racy and interesting than his literary side, and it shows him in genial, lovable aspects that will surprise many who yet recall the old libels upon his personal character. He had strong native wit (of which he was too sparing in his formal

literary productions), and, for a dreamer, astonishing shrewdness of observation. Of him it might be said as of Renan, that he thought like a man and acted like a child. Though abnormally sensitive and shy, disliking society in the most limited sense, on account of his devotion to his work and also because of certain personal disadvantages, his affections were warm, sincere and constant. One cannot resist the belief,—of which indeed there is no lack of testimony,—that he was a true friend, a fond husband and father, and a genuine lover of humanity.

This article is running beyond bounds, but I venture to cite a few more extracts,—always from his personal letters,—that shed light on the man rather than the writer:

"We can reach the highest life only through that self-separation which the experience of illness, that is, the knowledge of physical weakness, brings."

* * *

"How sweet the Japanese woman is!—all the possibilities of the race for goodness seem to be concentrated in her."

* * *

"My little wife said the other morning that there was a *mezurashii kedamono* in the next

yard. We looked out, and the extraordinary animal was a goat!"

* * *

"You do not laugh when you look at mountains, nor when you look at the sea."

* * *

"No man, as a general rule, shows his soul to another man;—he shows it only to a woman. . . . No woman unveils herself to another woman—only to a man; and what she unveils he cannot betray."

* * *

"It is only in home-relations that people are true enough to each other,—show what human nature is, the beauty of it, the divinity of it. We are otherwise all on our guard against each other."

* * *

"No man can possibly know what life means, what the world means, what anything means, until he has a child and loves it."

* * *

"Perhaps if my boy grows old, there will some day come back to him memories of his mother's dainty little world,—the *hibachi,*—the *tako,*—the garden, the lights of the shrine,—the voice and hands that shaped his thought and guided every little tottering step. Then he will feel very, very lonesome,—and be sorry he did not follow after those who loved

him into some shadowy resting place where the Buddhas still smile under their moss!"

* * *

"I have at home a little world of about eleven people to whom I am Love and Light and Food. It is a very gentle world. It is only happy when I am happy. If I even look tired, it is silent and walks on tiptoe. It is a moral force. I dare not fret about anything when I can help it, for others would fret more. So I try to keep right."

IV

THE close of Lafcadio Hearn's life was embittered by the loss of his position as professor of English Literature at the Imperial University of Tokyo, and no doubt his days were shortened by the terrible anxieties into which he was thus thrown. His state was never so bad as it appeared to his sensitive imagination, to his boding spirit hopelessly clouded by the misfortunes of his youth; and a remedy was found, alas! too late. His letters about this time are not cheerful reading, but they are of the most painful interest and they will ever call forth love and pity for the struggling and afflicted man of genius who in

life had known too little of these qualities. I quote from one letter written in this sad and anxious time to Mrs. Wetmore; it is especially poignant, but the burden is that of others.

"You will be glad to hear that I am almost strong again, but I fear that I shall never be strong enough to lecture before a general public. . . . The great and devouring anxiety is for some regular employ—something that will assure me the means to live. . . . I am worried about my boy—how to save him out of this strange world of cruelty and intrigue. And I dream of old ugly things—things that happened long ago. I am alone in an American city, and I have only ten cents in my pocket, —and to send off a letter that I *must* send will take three cents. That leaves me seven cents for the day's food!"

Lafcadio Hearn died on September 26th, 1904, in the fifty-fourth year of his age. The story of his last illness and death, as told by his faithful Japanese wife, is most quaint and pathetic and marked by little touches that reveal the spiritual nobility of the man. True to his life-long revolt against the religion of gloom and sorrow, he bade her not to weep for him, but to buy for his coffin a little earthen flower pot, and to bury him in the yard of a

small temple in some lonesome quarter. (In death as in life the man shrank from the world.) Then she was to play cards with their children, and if any people came to ask for him, she was to say that he had died some time before.

Though his physical breakdown was gradual and he had noted in himself many warnings of the Great Change at hand, the end came suddenly. On the eve of his death he dreamed that he had gone on a long and distant journey: the fulfilment came to him with no more pain or struggle than "a little folding of the hands to sleep" . . .

Of him a noble Japanese has written:

"Like a lotus this man was in his heart . . . a poet, a thinker, a loving husband and father, and a sincere friend. Within him there burned something pure as the vestal fire, and in that flame dwelt a mind that called forth life and poetry out of the dust, and grasped the highest themes of human thought."

Lafcadio Hearn lies at rest in the far Eastern land of Japan, among the strange people whose life he adopted, who gave him a home and the love of wife and children, whose bravery and virtue, whose national spirit,

whose beautiful legends and folklore, whose ancient and wondrous religion, he interpreted with perfect art and deep divining sympathy, for an alien world; building thereupon his chief title to remembrance. Few writers of our time have achieved a more worthy or left a more lasting fame.

XI

THE DEFENCE OF DAMIEN

A PERSON all unknown to fame, one Rev. Frederic Rowland Marvin, makes a sinister bid for notice by impeaching the integrity of Robert Louis Stevenson's motives in writing the celebrated Letter on Father Damien.

Needless to recall, the Letter was addressed to the Rev. Dr. Hyde, of Honolulu, who had cast some very gross and unmerited aspersions upon the martyr priest.

Damien, as all the world knows, was a Belgian missionary priest who had devoted himself to the service of the lepers at Molokai, and who, contracting the disease, at the height of his vigorous ministry, died among them. The question of his saintship cannot be taken up by the Church until a hundred years after his death. Meantime many people of different religions, and some of none at all, regard Damien as the only authentic saint of modern

times. Robert Louis Stevenson was unquestionably of this opinion.

The Rev. Dr. Hyde, of Honolulu, in a letter to a brother parson (the Rev. H. B. Gage) made the hideous charge that Damien had become infected with leprosy through sexual intercourse with the women lepers of Molokai; characterized him as "a coarse, dirty man, headstrong and bigoted", and sneered at the chorus of praise which his heroic death had evoked. All of which was extensively circulated by religious papers of the Hyde denomination.

This precious testimony came under the eye of Robert Louis Stevenson, who had himself visited the leper colony when Damien was "in his resting grave", and had collected the whole truth regarding him from the witnesses of his life and death. By a useful coincidence, the author had likewise seen the reverend slanderer Hyde and held converse with him at his "fine house in Beretania street" (Honolulu).

The posthumous attack upon Damien by a rival but recreant missioner, breathing a sectarian malignity rare in our time, touched that fiery intrepid soul to an utterance which ranks with the highest proofs of his genius and the

best fruits of the liberal spirit. His Letter on Father Damien is, in truth, the quintessence of Stevenson, the choice extract of his passion and power, his deep-hearted hatred of injustice, his princelike contempt of meanness, his loathing scorn of religious bigotry, his tenderness, delicacy, and chivalry,—all conveyed in a flawless triumph of literary art. Not vainly did he boast:

"If I have at all learned the trade of using words to convey truth and to arouse emotion, you have at last furnished me with a subject." And again: "I conceive you as a man quite beyond and below the reticences of civility; with what measure you mete, with that it shall be measured to you again; with you, at last, I rejoice to feel the button off the foil and to plunge home."

I can never read the Letter to Hyde without seeing a flame run between the lines; I never lay it down that I do not at once bless and damn the Rev. Dr. Hyde for having provoked it: indeed there is a sort of merit in having challenged such a flagellation. But not being myself parson-led, I wish the gentleman no worse damnation than is assured to him in Tusitala's honest tribute.

Well, this is the piece of work which Dr. Marvin—he is, it appears, a parson like the eternally disgraced Hyde—seeks to disparage by attainting the integrity of the knightliest figure of modern letters. Let us see how this bold parson achieves the asinine exploit of kicking the dead lion and betraying his folly to the world.

After stating the extraordinary assumption that Stevenson's Letter on Father Damien "was never regarded as anything more than a striking exhibition of literary pyrotechny", Dr. Marvin proceeds to judgment as follows:

"Stevenson's letter was, I am fully persuaded, more the work of the rhetorician than of the man. He was carried away by the opportunity of making a rhetorical flourish and impression, and so went further than his own judgment approved. Stevenson was a man of many noble qualities, and conscience was not wanting as an element of power in his life, but his letter to Dr. Hyde was not honest, nor had it for any length of time the approval of his own inner sense of right and justice. He did not really believe what he wrote, neither did he intend to write what he did. The temptation from a literary point of view was great, and the writer got the better of the man."

Here the parson speaks in no uncertain tone—a mere literary man would not so frame his indictment. But what a gorgeous piece of impudence!

I would not take the Rev. Dr. Marvin too seriously, but lest any person with the wit of three asses should be deceived by his shallow effrontery, one feels bound to notice it. And since the Rev. Doctor has of his own free will made himself yoke-fellow with the defamatory Hyde, it is but just that he be clothed with the full dignity of his election.

To discuss the foolish, nay vicious question which he has raised concerning Stevenson's honesty of motive in writing the Letter to Dr. Hyde, would shame any man—not a parson—of common sense. Nor is it needful in any case, Dr. Marvin sufficiently putting himself out of terms in these words: *"The temptation from a literary point of view was great, and the writer got the better of the man."*

Now, lovers of Stevenson have no need to be reminded that such was his passionate care to avoid the slightest doubt of his sincerity in writing as he did upon Damien and to repel the stock literary imputation here uttered by

a worthy champion of Hyde, that the Letter was printed originally for *private distribution only*. Although the public demand for it soon became irresistible, Stevenson consistently refused to touch a penny from the publication. In 1890 he put this bluntly to a London publisher who wished to bring out an edition:—"The Letter to Dr. Hyde is yours or any man's. I will never touch a penny of remuneration. I do not stick at murder: I draw the line at cannibalism. I could not eat a penny roll that piece of bludgeoning had gained for me." . . .

"If the world at all remember you" (said the Letter to Hyde) "on the day when Damien of Molokai shall be named Saint, it will be in virtue of one work: your letter to the Rev. H. B. Gage."

Was ever such a sight vouchsafed to gods or men as this of the Rev. Dr. Marvin struggling belatedly to win for himself a small title in that infamous remembrance—to snatch a rag from the garment of shame which the great artist fitted upon Dr. Hyde in his character of Devil's Advocate against Damien? . . .

The defence of Damien remains one of the cherished documents of the free spirit. I thank

Dr. Marvin for having given me an occasion of re-reading it, and I cheerfully accord him the grace of having moved me to perform this religious duty *twice,* instead of (my usual practice) *once,* in the year. I can but wonder what manner of man is he that it should have done him so little good; yet I know I shall love it the more that its truth is thus again proven by the futile attacks of a spiritual fellow to Hyde.

Yes, I re-read—as, please God, often I shall re-read—that true story of Damien's martyrdom, bare and tragic as Molokai itself, traced by the hand of one who had no sympathy of religious faith with him but only the common kinship of humanity—"that noble brother of mine and of all frail clay". I read again, with quickened pulse, of the lowly peasant priest, who, in obedience to the Master's call, "shut to with his own hand the doors of his sepulchre!" I saw once more that woeful picture of the lepers' island, surrounded by a great waste of sea, which to those condemned wretches spells the black despair of infinity: —in its midst the hill with the dead crater, the hopeless front of precipice, the desolation there

prepared by nature for death too hideous for men to look upon. Again I made that melancholy voyage to Molokai and wept with Tusitala as he sat in the boat with the two sisters, "bidding farewell, in humble imitation of Damien, to the lights and joys of human life". I shuddered to mark the fearful deformations of humanity that awaited us on the shore—the population of a nightmare—every other face a blot on the landscape. I saw the place was an unspeakable hell even with the hospital and other improvements, lacking when Damien came there and "slept that first night under a tree amidst his rotting brethren". I visited the Bishop-Home, whose every cup and towel had been washed by the hand of "Dirty Damien". I saw everywhere the tokens of his passage, who "by one striking act of martyrdom had directed all men's eyes on that distressful country—who at a blow and the price of his life had made the place illustrious and public". I thought upon that great and simple renunciation, daunting the mind with its sheer sacrifice which, better far than all the loud-tongued creeds, brought the living Christ within sight and touch and understanding. And these wonderful lines of Browning came

into my mind with a sudden vividly realized meaning and pathos:

Remember what a martyr said
On the rude tablet overhead:
"I was born sickly, poor and mean,
A slave—no misery could screen
The holders of the pearl of price
From Cæsar's envy; therefore twice
I fought with beasts, three times I saw
My children suffer by his law;
At last my own release was earned;
I was some time in being burned,
But at the close a Hand came through
The fire above my head, and drew
My soul to Christ whom now I see.
Sergius, a brother, writes for me
This testimony on the wall—
For me, I have forgot it all."

(Since this essay was written, I have met with other writings of Dr. Marvin's which justify a more favorable estimate of his mind and motives than is herein expressed. No doubt he erred chiefly through excess of loyalty to his cloth—but his error remains, unconfessed and unexpiated, in a printed book. Even so, a humble servant of Literature may be allowed to owe a duty to his order, which in this instance, he conceives, is also a duty to the higher cause of Truth. M.M.)

XII

A PORT OF AGE

READER, when for you as for me the wild heyday of youth is past, and the heart of adventure all but pulseless, there is yet remaining to us a wonderful and untried realm of romance. When churlish Time shall think to retire us from the heat and zest of life, classing us, too prematurely, as "old boys," there is still a trick we may turn to his discomfiture. When the younkers club their foolish wits for a poor joke at our expense—what is so utterly inane to maturity as juvenile humor, green-cheese pleasantry, pithless, fledgeling conceits?—we who are wise know that the best of the game is still for us; nor would we change with the reckless spendthrifts who mock us from the vanity of twenty year.

It's ho for candles, a book and bed!

For candles, the modern equivalent, of course. I prefer a strong, well-shaded lamp to electric light or gas; the rockefeller burns

with a steady flame, does not sputter, or dwindle, or go out entirely, leaving you in a sulphuric darkness. But the wick should be trimmed by the hand of her who loves you best in the world; by her, too, must the reading table be adjusted cosily at the head of the bed, so that the incidence of the gently burning flame may be *just right*—the more or less in these matters is of infinite significance; by her must the books and, above all, The Book, be disposed ready to the discriminating hand of the Sovereign Lector.

Oh!—and, of course, the pipes or cigars. No smokeless person hath any rights in this kingdom; he cometh falsely by his investiture; he is a Bezonian without choice; a marplot and spy—out with him! . . .

As to the time of going to bed, I would say eight o'clock, or half after eight; not earlier nor later, though the point need not be strained to a finical nicety. But one can not conveniently go to bed amid the daylight business of the house, nor before supper, nor too soon after it. I knew a man who perversely insisted upon going to bed at five o'clock; he never rose to the dignity of a true bed-reader, and that which is, properly used, the most de-

lightful of indulgences, became in the end, to this person, a formidable dissipation. Like a bad mariner, he was constantly out of his reckoning and at last came to grief: the fact that he was a hater of the emollient weed no doubt aided the catastrophe.

But assuming that all the unities have been fulfilled, that the Book, the Reader and the Bed are in the most fortuitously fortunate conjunction, will you tell me that the world has a sweeter pleasure to bestow, a more profoundly satisfying, yet not enervating, luxury of indulgence?

Recall an instant that first delicious thrill of relaxed ease, of blissful security, of complete physical well-being—every nerve telegraphing its congratulations and your spinal column intoning a grand sweet song of peace! You are now between the snowy sheets, and the Elect Lady is looking tenderly to the pillows, etc., while you are tasting the most exquisite of sensations in the back of your calves. This is the veritable *nunc dimittis* moment of the experience; you are prepared, soothed and dulcified for what the Greeks called euthanasy; could that old classic idea of dissolution afford you a sweeter pang?

But, man, you're not dying like a rose in aromatic pain—you're simply going to bed to read. And here the Elect Lady, giving a final pat to the pillows, leans over, kisses you fondly and says, "All right now, dear?"

To which you reply (dissembling an internal satisfaction violent enough to alarm the police)—"All right now, darling, thank you—but just push the cigars a bit nearer—there. And be sure you tell Mary to keep the children quiet. And, of course, you won't forget to bring *it* up later—with a good bit of ice; so soothing after the mental excitement of a strong author. Thank you, dear."

These details will often be varied—the unwedded reader is not, I think, steeped in such felicity, and of course there be instances where the married lector does not come at his desire so featly—but the outline remains the same. And the result arrives, as the French say: that is, my gentleman comes to book and bed.

Then truly is he in that happy state described by the poet,—

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot";

raised to the Nirvana of the mind; close-wrapped in the eider-down security of his little

kingdom that knoweth no treasons, stratagems or insurrections; in the world and yet not of it, like unto, though in a different sense from, the Apostolic figure; tasting the pure pleasures of the intellect with a delicious feeling of mental detachment and at the same time a caressing consciousness of bodily ease; no other troubling *imperium* in his *imperio*—no thief in his candle—no fly in his ointment—nothing but the Book and his Absoluteship!

It is, Socratically considered, the only rational method of reading—the most universally abused of all the liberal arts. Are there not persons who make a foolish pretence of reading on railways trains, or in public restaurants, or in hotel lobbies, or even in theatres between the acts;—nay, sometimes, by a piece of intolerable coxcombry, during the play itself? Whip me such barren pretenders!—there is not a reader among them all.

I am not sure that there is higher praise (for the intellectuals) than to be called a good reader, which is to say, a bed-reader. For the true reader *(lector in sponda)* is only less rare than the genuine writer; his genius no less a native and unacquired attribute; his setting apart from the common herd as clearly defined

and delimited. To be a reader in this, the only true sense, is to belong to the Aristocracy of Intellect, and to be assured of a philosophy which brings to age a crown of delight.

No man should take up the noble habit of reading abed before the age of discretion, that is to say, the fortieth year—for at the eighth lustrum comes the dry light of reason, which is the true essential flame of the bed-reader, and, lacking which, he hath as little profit of his vocation as the owl at noonday.

II

I HAVE for some years made a practice of shrewdly canvassing my friends and correspondents (more or less bookish) on this delicate subject. I say delicate because, owing to a sort of housewifely intolerance much to be deplored, the pleasure of reading abed is here and there regarded as an illicit and reprehensible one—I have even heard of one or two strong-minded ladies who condemned it as "positively immoral". However, as a result of my inquiries, I am enabled to pronounce that the most delightful of intellectual pastimes is in no likelihood of falling into neglect. This, too, in spite of the fact that the habit of smok-

ing at the same time—a necessary concomitant, as I have shown—makes of the indulgence a "fearful joy", and occasionally creates a little business for the insurance companies.

But there is scarcely an act of our daily life that does not involve some risk or peril, and the stout bed-reader (and smoker) will not suffer himself to be daunted by a slight accident or so, or even a hurry call from the fire department. Besides, there are some obvious precautionary measures which elderly gentlemen (in particular) might take in order to combine the two delicious habits of reading and smoking abed with reasonable safety: *e.g.*, neat, removable book-covers of asbestos might be provided, with gloves of vulcanized rubber or some similar non-inflammable material; and if one have the unlucky habit of nodding into the lamp, the *bonnet de nuit* might also be of rubber or asbestos. Such an apparatus should render the careless bed-reader immune against any but the most extraordinary accidents. I would not have him feel *too* safe, however, for as stolen pleasures are known to be sweetest, so in this matter the bed-reader's gratification is heightened and dulcified by a titillant sense of lurking danger. Indeed, I make no doubt

that a spark now and then dropping in the bedclothes, or in the folds of the reader's nighty, or in his whiskers (should he haply be valanced) and discovered before any great damage is done or profanity released, adds appreciably to the pleasure of the indulgence, and is not a thing to be sedulously guarded against. However, this is all a matter of taste, for we know, without reference to theology, that some persons can stand more fire than others.

This point being settled, I am asked to give a list of books or authors suitable to the requirements of the mature bed-reader (there are no others). I do not much relish the task, as I can not bear to have my own reading selected for me, and the priggish effrontery of those lettered persons who are constantly proposing lists of "best books" (in *their* estimation, forsooth!) moves my spleen not less than the purgatorial industry of the Holy Office. But perhaps I may indirectly oblige my friends by glancing slightly at the preferences—or mere crotchets, if you will—of an irreclaimable bed-reader, who, being entirely quit of the vanities of careless youth, has now reached that mellowed philosophic age when he would rather lie snugly abed with a bright lamp at

his pillow and a genial author to talk to him than do anything else in the world. Oh, by my faith!

In the first place, then, I would put books of a meditative personal cast, such as have the privilege of addressing themselves to the reader's intimate consciousness and of beguiling him into the illusion that their written thoughts and confessions are his very own. Of such favored books, beloved and cherished of the true bed-reader, are the great essayists or lay preachers, Montaigne, Bacon, Swift, Addison, Voltaire, Rousseau, Rochefoucauld, Macaulay, Lamb, Emerson, Carlyle, Thackeray (in his Lectures and Roundabouts), Renan, Amiel—but I am resolved not to catalogue. These and such as these are emphatically *thinking* books, fit for the quiet commerce of the midnight pillow; trusted confessors of the soul, through whom it arrives the more perfectly to know itself; faithful pilots in the perplexed voyage of life; wise and loving friends whose fidelity is never suspect or shaken; solemn and tender counsellors who give us their mighty hearts to read; august nuncios that deliver the messages of the high gods.

I would bar all modern fiction, books of the

hour—that swarm of summer flies—all trumpery love stories founded on the longings of puberty and green-sickness, all works on theology and hagiography (except St. Augustine's Confessions), political histories, cyclopedias, scientific treatises, the whole accursed tribe of world's condensed or canned literatures and such like compilations, the books of Hall Caine, Marie Corelli and G. Bernard Shaw,* newspapers—that fell brood of time-devourers —and magazines—those pictured inanities.

After this summary clearing of the field, the task of selection should not be difficult; but even at this stage the prudent bed-reader can not afford to go it blind.

I would not advise books of a violently humorous character more recent than Rabelais, Don Quixote or Gil Blas, even though I may here seem to utter treason against my beloved Mark Twain. But I must be honest with my readers—bed-readers, of course—and truth compels me to say that a recumbent position is not favorable to much exercise of the diaphragm, which such reading calls for. I took Huck Finn to bed with me once when I lay

* This without prejudice—I am merely indicating a preference of the "desipere in loco" order.

down for a long illness, and hung to him in spite of the doctor and the nurse, until the happy meeting with Tom Sawyer, when I wandered off into a fantastic world where fictions and realities were one. The doctor afterward said I might have died laughing at any time, and now I sometimes think that it wouldn't have been such a bad thing—nay, I even believe that one couldn't chance upon a happier kind of death. . . .

However, I must insist that my friends shall sit up to Huck Finn, the Innocents and all that glorious family connection, as also to their co-sharers in a smiling immortality, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller. Nor let me forget another genial figure who has taken a tribute of harmless mirth, scarcely inferior to theirs, from thousands of hearts and whom *they* would welcome to their benign fellowship—I strongly urge the reader who would have a care of his health, not to go to bed with Mr. Dooley.

III

NEXT to the great essayists mentioned above, the poets offer the best reading for night and the bed—indeed I am not sure

but that it is the only way to read certain poets.

I am equally fond of the prose and the poetry of Heine, and think he furnishes a variety of entertainment which, on several counts, is unmatched by any writer. But Heine gives no rest, and one is soon overborne by the charges of his wit and the unceasing attacks of his terrible raillery.

In the most intimate sense Horace is (of course) without a rival as a companion and comforter of the nightly pillow. This charming Pagan has confessed and will always confess the best minds of the literate Christian world. I know one person who owes his dearest mental joys, his best nocturnal consolations, and the very spring of hope itself to the little great man of Rome. But he *must* be read in the original—a condition which unfortunately disqualifies too many readers. The songs of Horace, written in the immortal tongue of Rome, can never become antiquated. Though the Pontifex and the Virgin ceased hundreds of years ago to climb the Capitolian hill, though the name of Aufidus is lost where its brawling current hurries down, still that treasure of genius endures, more lasting than brazen

column, a joy and a refreshment ever to the jaded souls of men.

Horace has the supreme and almost unique fortune to appear always modern, his genius being of the finest quality ever known and happily preserved in an unchanging tongue. He is, for instance, far more modern than Dante and distinctly nearer to us than the Elizabethans. Alone, he constitutes a sufficient reason for the admirable, though sometimes foolishly censured, practice of reading abed.

I do not care to read the plays of Shakespeare betwixt the sheets—it seems a piece of coxcombry to coolly degust the accumulated horrors of Macbeth and Lear while lolling on your back and sybaritically exploring the softest places in your downy kingdom—truly a case of what's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba! But I find it quite different with the Poems, which (I may remark) are too frequently overlooked even by those who pride themselves on knowing their Shakespeare. Lately, in Dr. Rolfe's admirable edition, I so re-read the Sonnets, and for the first time arrived at something like a true sense and appreciation of their deep organ melodies, and at least a partial understanding of the strange lawless pas-

sion which inspired those wonderful poems that witness forever the glory and mayhap the shame of Shakespeare.*

No doubt, the learned Dr. Rolfe had to sit up to write his invaluable commentary, with a thorny desk at his breast; how much more fortunate I to digest it with unlabored impartiality, now and then calmly approving or, it may be, controverting the Doctor, but without heat; reclining at my ease, in a silence and abstraction so perfect that fancy could almost hear the living voices of the actors in this strange, repellent drama of the greatest of poets—stranger and more darkly perplexed than any which his genius gave to the stage—and the mind overleaped three full centuries to that memorable English Spring—

"When proud-pied April dress'd in all his trim
Did put a spirit of youth in everything,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him!"

Letters of memorable men and women are among the pleasantest and most profitable reading for the bed. There is so great a plenty

* The question will, however, always remain a debatable one, while Time and the enduring greatness of Shakespeare evermore tend to silence it.

of such books that I need not be at pains to specify—and as said before, I refuse to catalogue.

In this domain Voltaire is *facile princeps:* his wise, witty, enchanting letters (which have survived in point of living interest the bulk of his hundred volumes) give you the very heart of that wonderful Eighteenth century—that Sphinx rather, some of whose propounded riddles the world is even now striving to answer with enormous travail of blood and tears.

I may confess that, to my humor, Lamb's letters are among the rarest *deliciæ deliciarum,* the most enjoyable reading, of this rather fastidious description.

Dickens's letters are valuable beyond those of most later English moderns, for their brave and hopeful spirit. And to take a more recent instance, Lafcadio Hearn's letters from Japan are worthy to be included in our select bed-reader's library; indeed there are some not unsapient critics who prefer them to his more formal writings.

Books of autobiography are good, so that they be not too veracious, like Franklin's;—a defect which pertaineth not to the far preferable Messer Cellini. Memoirs and personal

chronicles I would not forbid, though the Pepysian hunt has been run to death, out of compliment to the modern fashion of glorifying the indecent Past, and is too often the mark of snobbery and a vulgar soul. A man shall not leave the empyrean of the poets to put his eye to chamber keyholes and his nose to chamber utensils with Samuel Pepys. . . .

Still, I would not deny that there be some engaging scoundrels, like Cagliostro and the before mentioned Cellini, with whom one may have profitable commerce in bed:—a thing that during the lives of these worthies rarely chanced to any man—or, more especially, any woman.

XIII

THE KINGS

IT is still summer with the kings, God save them!—a summer that has lasted for many of them over a thousand years. They make as brave a show to-day as ever in the past. It is said they are neither loved nor feared so much as of old, and I know not how that may be; but of this I am sure, that the glory of kings is the envy of the world. The sunlight gilds their palaces and royal capitals, and strikes through the many-hued windows of their cathedrals in which they deign to accept a homage second only to that paid to Divinity itself. God is in His heaven, and they are on their hundred thrones.

And these thrones are quite as safe to-day as in the olden time when few or none doubted that the kings were set upon them by Divine Will. Thousands of armed men watch day and night to guard their peace. Cannon flank the entrances to their castles and palaces. The

life of the king is the chief care and preoccupation of every people—many starve that he may live as befits his royal state—many die in battle that his throne may be secure. Yet it is true, as in the olden time, that a king falls now and then under the assassin's hand; and the wisdom of man has never rightly explained this seeming failure of the providence of God. But there is a lot for kings as for common men, and accidents prove nothing. Kingship is still the best job in the world—and there are no resignations. Once in a while, it is true, an abdication has to be declared on account of the imbecility of some crowned head—but think how long kings have been breeding kings! What wonder that the distemper should now and then break out in the royal stud?

It is summer with the kings. They have never been a costlier luxury than they are today, except that they are not suffered to make war so often.* Yet the world continues to pay the price of kings with gladness, and though we have heard so much of the rising tide of democracy, it has not wet the foot of a single throne in our time. No doubt it will sweep over them all some day, but our chil-

* Written before the Great War, 1914-1918!

dren's children shall not see it. There is hardly a king in Europe whose tenure is not quite as good as that of our glorious Republic. Kingship is even a better risk than when Canute set his chair in the sands of the shore. Wrap it up in what shape of mortality you please—let it look out boldly from the eyes of a real king, as rarely happens; let it peer from under the broken forehead of a fool or ogle in the glances of a hoary old Silenus,—it is still the one thing in the world which absolutely compels reverence. Other forms of authority are discounted more and more; the Pope who once had rule over kings, sees his sovereignty dwindled to a garden's breadth; the chiefs of republics wield a precarious power, often without respect: the glory that hedges a king remains undiminished and unaltered. The kings owe much to God, and God owes something to the kings—when the world shall have seen the last of these, it will perhaps discard the old idea of Divinity. But, as I have said already, that will take a long, long time—so long that it is quite useless to form theories on the subject.

It is summer with the kings. Nowhere such radiant, golden summer as in royalty-loving

Germany. There, big thrones and little thrones —such a lot of them!—are all sound and safe —sounder and safer than some of the royal heads that peer out from them. There the play of kingship has been played with the best success to an audience that seldom criticizes and never gets tired nor steals away between the acts. If the good God composed this play, —as so many people piously believe,—then He must hold the honest Germans in special favor—as an author He can not but be flattered. That he does so hold them is evident from His permitting them to triumph over those incomparably better actors, the French.*

This charming, prosaic, joyous, antiquated, picturesque, yet somewhat dull pageant of royalty goes on in Germany forever. If it ever came to a stop for but one day, we may be sure the honest sun that has beamed approvingly upon it for centuries would do likewise. The people fully believe that God wrote the play, and they cling the more fondly to the belief for the reason aforesaid—that it is, like themselves, a little dull. And what matters the sameness of the plot or the occasional incapacity of the leading actors, since the proper-

* In 1870-1871.

ties are as rich as ever and the stage-setting worthy of the best representations in the past?

Yes, it is summer with the kings, and never have they seemed safer on their hundred thrones. But now as ever in the long story of kingship, their safety lies not so much in their castles and forts, their arms and sentinels, their myriad spies and their hundred-handed police. Not so much in these things as in the sufferance of the patient people, and also their childlike enjoyment of the old play. From time to time the end of the piece is predicted; but it has had a famous run, and it will surely keep the boards—while there is summer with the kings.

II

SOME time ago I wrote that it was summer with the kings, but wondrous is the change wrought within a few short months. Now instead of golden summer, with the courtier sun gilding their palaces and domes and towers, and all the world eager to win a smile of them, a ray of royal favor,—there is winter, black with dread, lurid with rebellion, and sinister with every threat of treason and anarchy.

Though the kings yet hold some show of

sovereignty, they are as prisoners in their own strong places, beleaguered by the victorious people and feeling no trust in the very guards of their person. The grand palaces are closed up and deserted, and the splendid cathedrals, in which so often the *Te Deum* has been raised in celebration of some royal victory, are now dark and silent, save for the threnody of mourning bells.

Yes, it is winter with the kings. Panic, terror and wild-eyed unrest hold the place of that mailed security which had sate at scornful ease there during a thousand years. The kings look fearfully forth from their strong towers and castles, marking the flames of revolution that creep steadily nearer and hearing the distant shouts of the advancing army of rebellion. No heart of grace do the kings find in the thickness of the encompassing walls or the yet unbroken ranks of their soldiery. For every wind is now the courier of some new treason or blow at their power. Fealty is become a snare that watches its chance to kill or betray—he that rides forth with the royal command shall turn traitor ere yet he hath passed the shadow of the towers. It is marvellous how loyalty deserts a falling king!

Come now the priests in their most gorgeous vestments and bearing their most sacred images to cheer and console the dejected monarch. Of *their* fidelity he is at least assured, for to him and him alone they owe the grandeur of their state. But alas! what are priests to a king who has lost his people? . . . nay, they but remind him in his bitter despair of that Power which "hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted them of low degree". Idly as he had often marked the solemn words, they come back to him now with a terrible weight of meaning. Almost he could bring himself to spit upon these fawning priests who had ever feared to show him the naked purport of the accusing test that now pierces his heart like a sword. And he turns away from their mummeries lest he should cry out against the treachery of their God and his who has thus abandoned him in his need.

It is winter with the kings. That old habit of loyalty and obedience which held their thrones as if mortised and tenoned in granite, has vanished in an hour. Oh, the kings can not see how long it took to mine and shatter their rock of sovereignty, and they blindly regard as the madness of a moment what has

been the patient labor of centuries. Do not flout them in their fallen state by telling them that no hands wrought so busily at the work of destruction as their own. Have pity on the humbled kings!

But wait!—all can not yet be lost. Call in the leaders of the people and let us pledge our kingly word anew to grant the things they ask. 'Tis but a moment's humiliation and the fools will be content and huzza themselves back into our royal favor. Think you we do not know the cattle? Ho, there!—let the varlets be shown into our presence.

Alas, Sire!—it is now too late. Hard though it be to credit, the besotted people—pardon, Sire, for reporting the accursed heresy—have at last abandoned that to which they fondly clung in anguish and misery and trial, against even the evidence and reason of their brute minds, and in spite of all that your royal ancestors could do to alienate and destroy—their faith in kings!

But this is madness!—it can not be. What will the infatuate, misguided wretches do without their sovereign? Answer us that!

Craving your gracious pardon, Sire, they will do as well as they can. And from what

we, your humble councillors, can learn, they expect to make shift with a saucy jade wearing a Phrygian cap, whom they name Liberty! . . .

It is winter with the kings, but summer with the peoples who have waited long enough for their turn. Lustily are they girded up and made ready for the gleaning. Boldly and unitedly they march upon the ripe and waiting fields which, so often sowed with their blood and sweat, they now claim for their very own. God grant they may bring the harvest home!

XIV

LOUIS THE GRAND

Yes, I like to dream of the rare old time
When Louis the Grand was King;
And here I am moved to say in rhyme
What his poets might not sing:—
The mask of powder and scent and lace,
The court with its splendors gay,
The sly intrigues, with their wicked grace,
And the King's own part in the play.
[*My Favorite Poet*]

AMONG kings the star performer was easily Louis Fourteenth of France. He knew his rôle better than any crowned mime that has ever lived. He was perfect in every detail of its business, and of all men who have worn a crown he left the largest and most flattering memory of himself.

The story of Louis Fourteenth has been variously told, and most people agree that it is one of the most interesting in the world. In

truth, Clio has lavished upon it much of her art and not a little of her irony. There have been many attempts to depreciate Louis, or at least to measure him by merely human standards—without exaggeration, he was God to his own world as much as Cæsar Augustus was to his. The Jacobins during the Revolution dragged him from his royal tomb and, applying a tailor's tape to the cadaver, found that he was a few inches shorter than his Court believed. But it seems to me that they should have allowed for shrinkage. Voltaire the mocker who, though a courtier, was no great lover of kings, writes of Louis with as much respect as he could command. The terrible *rictus*—the grin—flickers out here and there, to be sure, but for the most part Monsieur Arouet keeps his countenance well. An excellent judge of ability in kings and commoners, there is no doubt that he regarded Louis as an able man. As a mere man he was never thought of by his own world during the long years of his grandeur. People could not look at him without a sun-dazzle in their eyes—that glory which shut out so much waste of blood and treasure, such ruinous devastation of peaceful lands, such misery among the serfs of

the soil, such terror of conscription stalking abroad everywhere like a universal Death!

Daudet tells a pretty story of a young dauphin of France who, with charming naïveté, alluded to God as "Our Cousin". Louis had too much taste to make such a solecism, but had he done so we may be sure the Court would not have minded it, and the Archbishop of Paris would have offered no objection. Heaven was never so near any place on this earth as it was to Versailles in those days. When Madame de Maintenon complained to her brother that she could not endure the burden of her relations with the King, he remarked, "Perhaps you have an idea of marrying Almighty God!"

There were some great men in the time of Louis the Grand, but nobody thought of insulting the King by a comparison with his sovereign Majesty. Truly the world never saw a more finished actor. Great generals trembled when ushered into the Presence and scarcely dared look above the King's knee. Racine, the greatest poet of the age, having written something which gave his Majesty offence, actually went home and died of grief because Louis would not speak to him. This

is the saddest of his tragedies. There was also a caterer who killed himself in the most heroic manner because a supply of fresh fish had failed to reach Versailles in time for the King's dinner. In short, all persons, high or low, shared in the illusion produced by the power and grandeur, and above all, the personality of Louis. For him all poets sang, all sculptors carved, all painters painted. Comedy gave him her brightest smiles and Tragedy her rarest tears; while in his august cause on a hundred bloody fields the crested chivalry of France rode smiling to death!

But nowhere was the dominion of Louis so absolute as in the hearts of the women. For women love a King—God bless them!—and worship, especially of a man, is second nature to them. Therein is the secret of their passionate attachment to royalty in every age and country, and doubtless also of their devotion to the Church, in which the same idea is symbolized. Madame de Sévigné was as clever a woman as ever lived, with a most penetrating look into human nature and much experience of life. Yet her letters betray that she was under the universal illusion as to Louis, and if there be scandal in the Court of Heaven, it

could not be whispered more delicately than Madame de Sévigné does it.

Perhaps as an artist the King makes the most favorable showing in his affairs with women, and to many readers this is the most attractive part of his wonderful history. How he contrived to carry on his amours, in view of the whole Court, without loss of dignity and even with perfect decorum, is as choice a bit as Clio has in her wallet. He never bungled, or hurried, or made a mess of matters, or forgot an instant that he was King. In this, as in all other things, he was truly magnificent, and the lady upon whom his choice happened to fall, though she were among the proudest and loftiest in the realm, was consumingly envied for and scarcely deemed herself worthy of the intended honor.

The King's choice of a new favorite was usually announced by a gorgeous fête designed to express the royal desire. Very soon everybody was in the secret, including the Queen, who no doubt had the earliest intimation of it, and whose admirably resigned conduct, under such trying circumstances, was perhaps as creditable to Louis as any exploit sculptured on his monuments. There were several suc-

cessive favorites, but Louis was not a voluptuary, in the worst sense, and he never kept a half-dozen mistresses in commission at once, like the Merry Monarch across the Channel. Versailles under Louis never ceased to be a palace. Whitehall under Charles the Second became and long remained a brothel. A delicate odor of romance still hovers about the adulteries of Louis; the amours of the Stuart belong to the pornography of history.

Another point of difference: the women whom Louis had honored with his august affections never betrayed and disgraced him, like the concubines of Charles, and upon his leaving them, never turned to other men for consolation. *Aut Cæsar, aut nullus!* Like the lovely La Vallière, they went into convents, or like the superb Montespan, withdrew from the Court. It was doubtless of the La Vallière that Voltaire was thinking when he said that women give themselves to God when they are no longer acceptable to men.

The King was very liberal to his lady friends, as well he might be, since it was allowed that he owned all the wealth of the country, and it cannot be denied that he spent it accordingly. He showered titles and estates

upon his mistresses, and made no distinction between his bastards and the legitimate royal issue. In this he proved that a strong man can overrule every convention. Louis's mistresses were in turn the true queens of France, and alliance with his bastards was eagerly sought by the noblest houses in the kingdom.

Strange to say, although Louis was one of the best Catholics in the world, the Church seems to have winked at these little irregularities. Bossuet the eloquent never made them the subject of a sermon delivered in the presence of the great Monarch. In his old age, however, Louis did penance for his good times by revoking the Edict of Nantes and causing a great persecution of his Protestant subjects. Some writers ascribe this foolish and cruel act, so contrary to Louis's natural kindness, to the influence of Madame de Maintenon, who was first the mistress and then the privately wedded but unacknowledged wife of the King. This lady was far from being the most beautiful of his mistresses, but she outpointed them all in sense and tact. She was of a deep religious cast of mind, which in that age was not deemed inconsistent with the acceptance of such pleasures as fell to ladies of high station. The rec-

onciling of piety and pleasure was, in truth, the consummate comedy of the reign of Louis the Grand.

I have taken the somewhat original view that Louis was an artist, since he shaped his life in such superb fashion, and came tardy off neither in his least nor greatest efforts.

I add a proof: Does not the coquetry of the artist speak in his leaving to the world the unsolved mystery * of the Man in the Iron Mask?

* For the solution of this long baffling enigma, which was too much even for the keen-witted Voltaire, see the Author's "Adventures in Life and Letters."

XV

DINING WITH SCHOPENHAUER *

I WAS dining lately at Mouquin's, alone. You had better not so dine there, unless you have reached that melancholy climacteric, "a certain age"—(I do not plead guilty myself). It is not good for men to dine alone at Mouquin's, and it is even worse for Mouquin's. All here is planned for sociability and the sexes—the *menu* is a pæan of sex as frankly declarative as a poem of Walt Whitman's; the wines, the suave, light-footed French waiters (really French), seeing all and nothing, the softly refulgent electric bulbs, the very genius of the place, all bespeak that potent instinct which harks back to the morning of the world. One sees it in the smallest matters of detail and arrangement. Elsewhere there is room and entertainment for the selfish male, but here—go to! The tables are not adapted for solitary

* Since we are now under the Dry Dispensation, I reprint this bit of impressionism mainly for historic reasons.—M. M.

dining; at the very tiniest of them there is room for two: an arrangement that would have moved the irony of Schopenhauer, and that signalizes the grand talent of Monsieur Mouquin. To conclude, a solitary diner is an embarrassment, a reproach, a fly in the ointment of Monsieur Mouquin. I was all three to him lately, but I make him my most profound apologies—it shall not occur again. Why, I am now to tell.

I was dining at Mouquin's alone, and it seemed as if the spirit of Schopenhauer suddenly descended upon me, who had been there so often, joyous and joyously companioned. The waiter took my order with a veiled hint of disapproval in his manner. He forgot, too, that he was of Mouquin's and therefore, anteriorly of Paris—he spoke English far too well for the credit of the house. At Mouquin's, you know, the wines and the waiters are alike imported. I knew what the waiter was thinking about—I felt and understood his subtly insinuated reproach: I was alone. There was no person of the opposite sex with me to double or treble the bill, and to obey whose slightest hinted wish the garçon would fly with winged feet, *à la Mercure.* Decidedly it is a violence

to the Parisian waiter to dine alone at Mouquin's, for it robs him of that pleasing incentive which is essential to the perfect exhibition of his art. I do not qualify the phrase—the French waiter at Mouquin's is an artist, and never more so than when he rebukes me, wordlessly and without offence, for dining alone.

However, I was a good deal worse than being alone or in company, for have I not said that Schopenhauer was with me? Do you know Schopenhauer? Is he anything more than a name to you,—that giant sacker of dreams, that deadly dissector of illusions, that pitiless puncturer of the poetry of the sexes, that daring exposer of Nature's most tenderly cherished and vigilantly guarded secrets, whose thought still lies like a blight upon the world? Do you know his beautiful theory of love which is as simple as the process of digestion, and indeed very similar to it? Once in Berlin an enthusiast spoke in Schopenhauer's presence of the "immortal passion". The Master turned upon him with his frightful sneer and asked if his bowels were immortal! . . .

When Actæon surprised the chaste Diana at her bath, he was merely torn to pieces by his own hounds. Schopenhauer's punishment

for betraying the deepest arcana of Nature was worse, yet not worse than the crime merited—he was compelled to eat his own heart! . . . Not, I grant you, a cheerful table-mate for a dinner at Mouquin's, when the lights glow charmingly, and the bustling waiters, the incoming guests, the rustling of skirts, the low laughter indicative of expectancy, and the confused yet agreeable murmur of voices—the bass or baritone of the men mingled with the lighter tones of the women—announce a joyous evening. Charming fugue, in which a delicate ear may detect every note of appetite and passion, though the players use the surd with the most artistic precaution. (Mouquin's is the most discreet and admirably regulated of cafés.) Polite overture to the orgasm of the Belly-God and perhaps to the satisfaction of certain allied divinities whom I may not specify. Admirable convention, by which men and women come in sacrificial garments, or evening attire, to worship at the shrine of the Flesh.

The climacteric, perhaps? My dear sir, when I tip the waiter to-night, I can get him to say easily that I am not a day over thirty. . . .

Throughout the large room (we are upstairs, gentle reader) the tables are filling rap-

idly with well-dressed men and women. Nothing in their appearance, generally, to challenge remark; a conventional crowd of male and female New Yorkers, intent on a good dinner and subsidiary enjoyments. For the first time, perhaps, I notice how pleasant it is to observe everything at leisure, without having to talk to anyone—you really can not see things in a detached, philosophic manner when you have to jabber to a pretty woman.

A clerical-looking gentleman, with a severe forehead, is one of my near neighbors. His companion is a handsome young woman, rather highly colored, who seems more at home than the forehead. A couple take the table next to mine; the young fellow is well-looking enough, the girl has the short, colorless, indeterminate American face, with its pert resolve to be pretty; both are young and have eyes only for each other—that's the point. They sit down to the table as if preparing for the event of their lives; this eager young expectancy is smilingly noted by others than myself.

A large man convoying three heavy, matronly women who yet do not look like mothers —you know that familiar New York type— takes a favorable station against the wall

where there is much room for eating and whence the outlook is commanding. The large one perjures himself fearfully in explaining how he had it specially reserved. I know him for a genial liar, and maybe the ladies do, too. These four have evidently come to eat and drink their fill, and to look on: Schopenhauer is no concern of theirs, nor they of his.

Not so this elderly man with the dashing young woman on his arm—the man is too handsome to be called old, in spite of his white hair. The young woman has that look of complete self-possession and easy tolerance which such young women commonly manifest toward their elderly admirers—this is not romance, but what is generically termed the "sure thing". Schopenhauer is but faintly interested, and my eyes wander toward the little American type. She has had her second glass of wine by this time, and it has hoisted a tiny flag in her cheek. A little more and she will succeed in her determination to be pretty,—the dinner is only half under way. Schopenhauer bids me note now that she eats with undisguised appetite, and that she fixes a steadier gaze upon her young man than he can always meet. Both young heads are together and they eat as fast as they

talk—but youth atones for all. These two continue to draw the gaze of most persons in their vicinity.

There have been one or two mild selections by the orchestra, but they passed unnoticed in the first stern business of eating. It is a pity that artists should be subjected to such an indignity, but it can not well be avoided by artists who play for hungry people. The leader of Mouquin's orchestra—perhaps I should say the orchestra at Mouquin's—is a young man with a high forehead and long hair. I am not a critic of music, like my friend James Huneker, and I am unhappy in the difficult vocabulary which that gifted writer employs. But it seems to me the conductor and first violinist at Mouquin's is an artist. A veritable artist! No doubt I shall be laughed at for this—I have said that I am ignorant of the technique of criticism.

When the orgasm of eating had in a degree subsided, Schopenhauer nudged me to observe how the company began to give some attention to the music and even to applaud a little. Ah, it was then the young leader seemed grand and inspired to me. He looked as if he did not eat much himself; and his music—some-

thing from Tannhäuser—fell on my ears like a high rebuke to those guzzling men and women. I do not know for sure what the *"motif"* of it was (this word is from James Huneker), but the refrain sounded to me like, "Do not be swine! Do not be swine!"

The swine were in no way abashed—perhaps they did not understand the personal allusion. I have read somewhere in James Huneker that the Wagnerian *"motif"* is often very difficult to follow.

II

WE had reached the coffee, that psychic moment when the world is belted with happiness; when all our desires seem attainable; when with facile assurance we discount the most precious favors of love or fortune.

"You will now observe," whispered my invisible guest, "that with these animals the present is the acute or critical moment of digestion, from which result many unclaimed children and much folly in the world. The edge of appetite has been dulled, but there is still a desire to eat, and the stage of repletion is yet to be reached. These animals now think themselves in a happy condition for the æsthetic

enjoyment of art and even for the raptures of love. They have been fed."

The terrible irony of the tone, more than the words, caused me to turn apprehensively; but no one was listening, and my hat and coat occupied the chair where should have sat my *vis-à-vis*.

With the coming of the cordials and the lighting of cigarettes, the music changed to gayer measures. The young maestro's head was thrown back and in his eye flamed the fire of what I must call inspiration, in default of the proper phrase or hunekerism; while his bow executed the most vivid lightning of melody. This was the moment of his nightly triumph, when his artist soul was in some degree compensated for the base *milieu* in which his genius had been set by an evil destiny. He now saw before him an alert, appreciative audience, instead of an assembly of feeding men and women. For the moment he would not have changed places with a conductor of grand opera.

"Note that foolish fellow's delusion," said Schopenhauer. "I have exposed it a hundred times. He thinks he is playing to the souls, the emotions of all these people, and he plumes

himself upon his paltry art. They also are a party to his cheat. He is really playing to their stomachs, and their applause, their appreciation, is purely sensual. Yet I will not deny that he is doing them a service in assisting the process of digestion; but it is purely physiological, sheerly animal. The question of art does not enter at all, any more than the question of love does in the mind of yonder old gentleman who has eaten and drunk too well, and is now doting with senile desire upon that young woman."

I noticed indeed that the elderly gentleman had become gay and amorously confidential, while his companion smiled often with affected carelessness, yet seemed to be curiously observant of his every word and gesture. But *their* affair was no matter for speculation.

I glanced toward the clerical gentleman with the severe forehead. Both he and the forehead had relaxed perceptibly, and there was evident that singular change which takes place when a man doffs the conventional mask of self. His lady friend seemed disposed to lead him further. No romance here, I thought. . . . "It is the stuff of all romances," snarled Schopenhauer.

The heavy women waddled out once or twice to the retiring room and came back to drink anew. No man looked at them, save in idle curiosity—they were beyond tempting or temptation. "These represent the consummate flower of the sexual or passional instinct," remarked the sage. "Gross as they now seem, they were once young and what is called desirable. They yielded fully to their animal requirements—they ate, drank and loved, or to speak more correctly, digested—with such results as we now see."

I shuddered . . . but the large women were indubitably enjoying themselves.

There was more music—the guests applauded ever the more generously. The leader now condescended like a veritable artist—*à bas le café!*

I noticed that my little American beauty left the room (without her wraps) a bit unsteadily, and came back presently, very high in color. A drink was waiting for her, and she began talking with her young man as if he and she were alone in the world. I noticed also that the young man carried his liquor rather better and seemed to shrink a little under the eyes at-

tracted by the girl's condition. In my ear I heard the sardonic whisper of Schopenhauer:

"They call this *love!*" . . .

I would rather dine with a pretty woman at Mouquin's or elsewhere, than with any philosopher, living or dead. Especially Schopenhauer: *à bas* the climacteric!

XVI

ON LETTERS

THE pleasantest thing in the world to receive is a good letter.

Our dearest literary joys are not to be weighed in comparison; indeed they are not at all of the argument, for we share them with many. But a letter—a true letter I would say—belongs to us in an intimate and peculiar sense; something in ourselves has summoned it, and perhaps the deepest source of our pleasure is, that it could not have been written to another.

For it takes two to make a true letter—one to inspire and one to write it; one to summon and one to send.

Such a letter is the child of love, and we rightly hold ourselves blessed for it. A few such letters—none of us can expect many—make shining epochs in our lives.

But these letters are of the rarest, and I would now speak rather of such as we may not

too uncommonly hope to receive, supposing (egotistically) we have that in us which has grace to summon them.

A genuine letter is the best gift and proof of friendship. No man can write it who is only half or three-quarters your friend; he might give you money—this he could not give.

I have sometimes been convinced that a man was heartily my friend until I received a letter from him which showed me my error. Not indeed that such was his desire, nor could I point out the word or phrase that enlightened me. I *knew*—that was all.

This will perhaps seem the very opposite of the truth to persons who have never considered the matter deeply, and who think nothing is so easily given and obtained as a letter. But I am writing for those who understand.

If you have ever been deceived in your dreams of friendship, look now over those old letters you kept, and you will wonder how you could have cheated yourself; the truth you were once blind to, stares out from every written page. It was there always, but your self-love would not see.

Into every real letter the soul of the writer passes. It is this that gives a fabulous value

to the letters of great and famous persons concerning whom the world is ever curious—makers of history, poets, warriors, kings and criminals, queens and courtesans, all who for good or evil cause have gained a lasting renown. The collectors are justified by a psychology which few of them can penetrate.

The letters of some persons of whom we possess not a scrap of writing, would be absolutely priceless.

Is there, for example, enough worth in money to estimate the value of a letter written by the hand of JESUS? Can you imagine anything that would so thrill the world? . . .

Or, to take a lower and more probable instance: A First Folio of Shakespeare is worth several thousand dollars, and the owner of one never has to haggle for his price—the book itself is the ready money. The number of copies in the world is accurately known, as well as the fortunate owners. Some rich men are content with the distinction of possessing this rare volume, and they would like to have the fact mentioned on their tombstone. Well, a genuine letter of Shakespeare's—say to "Mr. W. H.", for example—would probably be worth more than all the First Folios in existence. True,

the poet had hardly a thought or sentiment or idea that he did not express somewhere in his plays or poems. No matter—these were of public note, in the way of his calling; what the world wants is a look into the innermost soul of *the man Shakespeare,* who has escaped amid the glory of the poet. A letter! a letter!

Charles Lamb offers a notable proof of the superiority of genuine letters over mere literary compositions. He wrote many letters to his friends from his high stool in Leadenhall street; letters that have never been equalled for quaint humor, shrewd-glancing observation, kindly comment on men and manners, and, above all, the intimate revelation of one of the most charming personalities ever known. Being thrifty in a literary sense, and by no means a ready writer—he speaks of composing with "slow pain"—it was his habit to make his personal letters do a double service by turning them into essays for the press—and, generally, spoiling them. At any rate, I prefer the letters.

The truth behind this matter is, that if a man be capable and make a practice of writing many good letters, he will surely fall off in other lines of literary effort. Renan discov-

ered this early in his career, and was very sparing thereafter of letters which took anything out of him in a literary way. One might call this a sort of economy, keeping the honey for the hive. It is not a bad plan, in a thrifty sense, but this article can not sympathize with it, as it makes for the poverty of letters.

II

ONE hears it said often that the age of letter-writing is past, and certainly it may be granted that the heavy firing in this department of Literature is over and done with. Chesterfield and Madame de Sévigné we have not always with us, save in their classic residuum, and few are those who seek to challenge their long-maintained primacy. Letter-writing is regarded as "slow work" in this rapid age—there are the telephone and telegraph, those arch-enemies of the Epistolary Muse; and alack! there is the typewriter, that marvellous aid to novelists and most effectual kill-joy of the letter-writer—why this should be so is another curious point of psychology, but so it is, as all the world agrees.

The shy Genius of Letter-writing revolts from this mechanical, public contrivance which

must have everything in crude black-and-white, and permits of no subtle reticence or half-disclosure, or discreet adumbration, such as we may confide to the intimate pen. Perhaps letter-writing went out with the advent of this so-called Tool of Progress and multiplier of Popular Fiction. Indubitable it is at any rate that while the blood of the true letter-writer circulates genially in his pen, it never seems to get into the typewriter.

Even literary persons nowadays,—nay, these particularly, I am assured,—are but little given to the gentle art of letter-writing. I have been astonished by the inept, spiritless, even dull letters of two or three authors of my acquaintance who have a great public vogue on account of their reputed wit and brilliancy;—one would no more suspect it from their letters than from their laundry-bills. Why this anomaly? "Thrift, Horatio, thrift!"—these gifted authors bring to letter-writing the dregs of their minds, saving their spirit, grace, charm and sincerity for the shop, *i.e.,* the professional "copy". The vital note of sympathy, the instant flow from mind to mind, in a word, all that goes to make a genuine letter, is vain to seek in their postal effusions.

However, admitting a sensible abatement and falling off in the epistolary province, and allowing that the classic letter-writers are in no danger from contemporary rivalship, I believe there is still abundant reason for hope and comfort on the part of all who cherish *true* letters. A very ancient scribe has observed that the thing which hath been is that which shall be. So I think one is justified in holding that there will always be good letters written, and especially by women—bless their kind hearts and busy, fertile minds!—who, literary or unliterary, have from the first use of post or messenger scribbled off the best letters in the world.

And why? the skeptical reader may ask. . . .

It is a large subject and an intricate, comprehending the whole difference between the sexes, but for the present occasion we may content ourselves with this: There is a peculiar sort of abnegation and devotion, an unselfish and naïve desire to please, implicit in the true letter-writer, which rarely falls to the endowment of mere Man! It must also be conceded that in the subsidiary graces of the epistolary art, women have always excelled their lords and masters (pre-Twentieth century style).

Finally, the deepest word on this point is yet to be said, and it is suggested by the Scriptural phrase, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings". Goodness and purity, loving faith and loyalty will continue, as always, to signalize this medium of expression.

I have said that women write the best letters, and for their dear sake I shrink not from what is both a truism and a tautology. Should I ever be able to acknowledge the debt I owe them?—to pay it were not possible, even in dreams. There is dear "E. W. W.", who came, a late blessing into my life, just when I sorely needed such a friend, and who sends me frequently of her rich store of wisdom and sweetness and strength, though her pen knows no rest and the publishers will not be denied. Strange!—I find in these gracious letters, alive with the breath of her spirit, something that even she is unable to express in her public writings—or is it the vitality of the personal note, the concentrated challenge of the intimate word, that makes me think so? . . . There is charming "T. G.", more beautiful even than her poetry, who writes too seldom (thriftiest she of the daughters of the Muse), but each of whose joyous letters fills with light the happy

week of its arrival. And "D. H.", who was not long ago "D. M."—what pleasure have I not received from her demure gayety and the sweet cordial note of her letters! . . . And "E. R.", who was even more recently "E. H." (ah, happy he who won her gracious youth!)—in what book shall I find a hint of her tricksy humor and bewitching pertness? . . . And "B. A.", whose pensive spirit ever seeking the Unknown, often startles me with its clear divinations—the privilege of the white-souled. . . . And "T. S.", whose prattling pen has given me cheer when weary and cast down, and who is so near to me in faith and sympathy, though I have never looked into her candid eyes. And "S. B.", the sweet silent Quakeress, who too rarely writes, and the thought of whom often lies like a sinless peace upon me. But let me cite no more lest I tempt the envious fates by a rash disclosure of my joys.

All these most fragrant friendships, enriching my else flowerless life with beauty and grace and precious consolation,—giving me indeed the rarer life of the spirit,—do I, though undeserving, hold . . . through letters.

XVII

THE SONG THAT IS SOLOMON'S

THERE is always a Jewish renaissance, and that is why we have lately been talking about the beauty of the Jewess.

It is a great theme and there is none other in the world charged with more sweet and terrible poetry.

The beauty of the Jewish woman is the eternal witness of the great epic of the Bible. If that divine Book were to be lost in some unthinkable catastrophe, it could be re-written wholly from the lips and eyes of Jewish beauty.

In no long time we should have again the complete stories of Sarah and the daughters of Lot (those forward but provident young persons); of tender-eyed Leah, of Rebekah and Rachel, sweet rivals in love; of Deborah and Hagar and Jael; of Ruth, that pensive figure whom so many generations have strained to see, "standing breast-high amid the corn"; of

Rahab the wise harlot and Jezebel the furious; of Tamar who played her father-in-law Judah so shrewdly wanton a trick; of Esther who fired the heart of the Persic king, saving honest Mordecai a painful ascension and much slaughter of the Chosen People; of Susanna, whom the elders surprised in her bath, not the first nor the last instance of the folly of old men; of Bathsheba, the fatal "one ewe lamb" or wife of Uriah, the lust for whose perfect body drove the holy king David to blood-guiltiness; of the Shulamite (lacking a name) whom Solomon, son of David, has sung to the world's ravishment; lastly—why not?—of her who has glorified Israel among the Gentiles and hath honor beyond all the daughters of the earth,—Mary of Bethlehem.

In this way, I repeat, the Bible could easily be put together again—it can never perish while a Jewish woman remains on the earth.

There never was a book written (worthy of the name) but that was more or less directly inspired by a woman. *Cherchez la femme* is the true theory of literary origins.

This is eminently true of the Bible, with which women have had (and still have) more

to do than with any other book in the history of the world.

The beauty of Jewish women is a wine that needs no bush; it is the sacred treasure that kept alive the hope of the race during the weary ages of shame and bondage. But for that jealously guarded talisman, the Jew would long ago have lost both place and name upon the earth.

Much of the old, consecrated, fatidic character attaches to the Jewish woman of the better class, even in this faithless day. She is honored above the wife of the Gentile, and she is conscious of a mission which fills her with the pride of an immemorial race. One fancies that no other woman either inspires or returns love in such measure as the Jewess; that she has some profound joys to give whose secret she alone possesses. The Jew has found in his home compensations for all the cruelty and ignominy which he has had to suffer from the world.

I admire true Jewish beauty so much that I would make a slight discrimination. Not all the Grecian women were Helens, and it need not be said that the highest type of beauty among Jewish women is less often seen than praised.

In truth, the rule holds good here, that great beauty and great ugliness are found side by side.

One reason for this is, undoubtedly, the bad taste of the average Jew, who can not have his women fat enough and who, therefore, encourages such departures from the ideal standard as serve to caricature the natural beauty and comeliness of Hebrew women. I believe there are Jews who would like to grow their women in a tub, according to the mediæval method of producing monstrosities. This bad taste the Jew comes by as a part of his Oriental inheritance—the Turk similarly fattens his women with all kinds of sweetmeats and suets. On account of this vicious taste among too many Jews, one often sees women of hideous corpulence at thirty who were types of ideal beauty at sixteen. Flesh is a good thing, but the Jew should not seek to suffocate himself in it, like Clarence in his Malmsey butt. Certes, it was not for an excess of "adipose tissue" that the Royal Poet named his love the *rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys.*

Let the Jewish woman, therefore, vigilantly cherish the wonderful beauty which has come down to her from those historic sisters of her

race whom kings desired with a passion that kindled the land to war, whom prophets and sages glorified, with whom heroes and martyrs walked and concerning whom God Himself has written many of the best pages in His own Book. Let her keep as near as she can to the ideal of loveliness which the great king, drunk with beauty and rapture, pictured thousands of years ago in the lineaments of his Beloved:—

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet and thy speech is comely; thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.

Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins which feed among the lilies.

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey comb; honey and milk are under thy tongue and the smell of thy garments is as the smell of Lebanon.

Thy neck is like a tower of ivory. Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple: the king is held in the galleries. How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

XVIII

IN PRAISE OF LIFE

I HAVE to thank the many loyal friends who gave me their sympathy and support during an illness that cut nearly three months out of my working calendar and suspended two issues of *The Papyrus*.* To have learned that there is such a stock of pure kindness in the world, is worth even the price I paid for it.

The desire of life prolongs it, say the doctors. 'Tis true, and when the wish for life gets its force from the strong motive of doing one's chosen work in the only world we surely know, then is Death driven back and to Life goes the victory.

Oh! Life, Life, how much better art thou than the shadowy hope of an existence beyond the grave! I can hold thee, taste thee, drink thee, wrap myself in thee—thou art a most dear reality and not a shadow. I kneel before

* April and May, 1904.

thee and proclaim myself more than ever thy true lover, believer and worshipper. Let me still be a joyous living pagan and I will not change with all the saints that have spurned thee and gone their pale way to Nothingness. I breathe thy warm, perfumed air as one newly escaped from the ante-chamber of Death. It is the last week of May—sweet May, I had thought never to see thee again!—and the whole world is fragrant with lilac. It is an efflorescence of life and hope and joy, Nature's largess after the dearth and desolation of winter. My soul is inundated with the golden waves of light and warmth and melody. Something of the sweetness and vague longing of adolescence revives in my breast. My heart trembles with a sudden memory of old loves, a memory called up by the sunshine and lilac scents and bird music with which the glad world is running over. Youth smiles a sly challenge at me, and Love holds forth his ineffable promise. I am drunk with the rapture of May—for I live . . . I live . . . I live!

Henley the brave, who not long ago captained his soul out into the Infinite, was moved by his experiences in hospital to write some of

his most striking poems. No doubt there is matter enough for a poignant sort of poetry in the House of Sickness. But literary inspiration fails a man when both his mind and body are disintegrating. I have brought nothing from my white nights in the hospital, but I left there a good deal of myself corporeally, and something, as I am admonished by a present difficulty in writing—of my admirable literary style. I think with pain and shame of the utter weakness to which I was then reduced, and I wince at the recollection of some concessions wrung from dismantled nature. I do not care to reflect upon the long blank hours or days, or weeks, during which I kept my bed in passive endurance, or upon one terrible night when I waited for what seemed to be the End with such courage as I could command. According to the Christian precept, I should have seen in all this the hand of chastening and meekly accepted the portion dealt out to me. But had I yielded to this comfortable sort of spiritual cowardice, I should probably not be alive to tell the story. Many good Christians are thus soothed out of this weary life into a better world, for a mental attitude of pious resignation is the hardest condition with which

the doctor has to contend and an unrivalled fattener of graveyards.

In the next room to mine was a fine young man who had undergone an operation for appendicitis. The nurses told me there was no hope for him, as he had been brought in too late—the nurses never contradict the doctors. Poor fellow, I could hear his every sigh and groan in the vain but heroic struggle he was making for life. Presently a stout clean-shaven man in clerical garb passed my door: it was the minister. He remained about ten minutes with the young man, who was a member of his church. When he left I watched from my window and saw him mount his bicycle and ride away. He did not return. The young man died next day. I made up my mind more decidedly that I would get better.

As a boy I used to read in my prayer book the supplication against the "evil of sudden death". In this is contained the very essence of the Christian idea, since death being synonymous with judgment, must needs appear terrible to the soul unprepared. Indeed, a sudden death in the case of an irreligious person is always hailed as a judgment by people of strict

piety. On the other hand, the favor of heaven is shown by the grace of a long sickness with its leisure for repentance and spiritual amendment. No picture is so edifying in a religious sense as that of the repentant sinner, over whom we are told there is more rejoicing in heaven than is called forth by the triumph of the just. Especially if the sinner have repented barely in time to be saved—that is the crucial point. If he should make his peace too soon, or if his repentance should come tardy off, it is not difficult to fancy the angels cheated of their due excitement. Such a blunderer would, I imagine, get more celestial kicks than compliments. God help us!—I fear me these death-bed repentances are the sorriest farce acted in the sight of heaven.

Yet farcical as they are, religion owes to them a great part of its dominion over the conscience of men. The Catholic faith, in particular, has invested the final repentance and absolution with a potency of appeal which few indeed are able to withstand. That is the meaning of the phrase, "Once a Catholic, always a Catholic". And there is doubtless a grandeur subduing the imagination in the proud position of the Church, that no soul need

be lost which has ever known her sacraments. Whatever the cold reason may make of this assumption, we may not forget how much it has contributed to the peace and consolation of humanity.

As for myself, having had two long and desperate sicknesses in the course of a half-dozen years,—having been so near the Veil which hides the Unknown that I could have touched it,—my prayer now and forever shall be: Lord, deny us not the blessing of sudden death. Even as quickly as Thou pleasest, call us hence, O Lord!

To be at home once more in mine own place, to sit under the cheerful lamp with pipe and book, to taste the small honors of domestic sovereignty, to look forward with a quiet hope to the morrow's task, to watch the happy faces of the children in whom my youth renews itself, and to share the peace of her who has so long partnered my poor account of joy and sorrow—all this is a blessedness which I feel none the less that I do not weary a benign Providence with fulsome praise.

Many pious works have been written on the incomparable advantage of being dead,—that

is, on the superior felicity of the life to come. The most eloquent and convincing of these macabre essays were composed by a set of men who had resigned nearly all that makes life dear to humanity. It is enough to say that they knew not love, the most powerful tie that attaches us to life. On this account their valuable works no longer enjoy the great popularity which they had in a simpler time. Indeed, the decline of this religious Cult of Death is one of the marks of an advancing civilization. No doubt it served a humane purpose in those dark centuries which we call the Ages of Faith, when life was far more cruel than it now is for the mass of mankind. Amid constant wars, bloodshed, oppression, famine, and their attendant evils, from which only a privileged few were exempt, what wonder that men turned eagerly to a gospel which to us seems charged with despair? So the ages of history during which Hell was most completely and perfectly realized on this earth, were also those in which faith in Heaven and the Church was universal. But with the slow growth of liberty and the partial emancipation of the human conscience during the past three centuries, there has gradually been formed a truer

and better appreciation of life. The Cult of Death has lost its hold upon the masses, with the dissolution of the old terrible dogma of eternal punishment. Men are more in love with life at this day than ever in the past—with life, and love, and happiness, and freedom, all of which were more or less limited and tabooed in the blessed Ages of Faith. As Heine said, "Men will no longer be put off with promissory notes upon Heaven—they demand their share of this earth, God's beautiful garden". . . .

Let us have life, and ever more life!

XIX

THE FORBIDDEN WAY

I AM asked if, in my opinion, suicide is ever justifiable.

The question is one for the individual conscience. Men and women are answering it with a dreadful yea, yea, every day, casting away life as they might reject a worn-out garment.

By social consent, founded on religious feeling, suicide is a crime against God. It is also held to be a crime against society. Persons attempting suicide and failing in the act are subject to the rigor of the law. No legal punishment is (of course) provided for those who succeed, but they do not escape in the next world—the churches take care of that: all theologians agree that the suicide is eternally reprobate and damned.

I dissent utterly from this inhuman teaching, while I can conceive of no circumstances that would make suicide justifiable for myself. For

so dissenting I shall be told that I render myself liable to damnation. Is it not strange that a man should be damned for holding too favorable an opinion of God?

But it may not be so bad as that—we have only some men's word for it!

We are told that hardly a soul comes into the world but at some time or other thinks of voluntarily quitting it, and is only restrained by the fear of eternal punishment.

I would change this—I would make life here, present, hopeful and abundant, the restraining influence. I would pit Life against Death and turn my back on the kingdom of shadows.

I do not defend suicide, but I plead for the many upon whom fate imposes this bitter destiny.

For myself I believe that life at the very worst is too precious a gift to throw away. Steep me in shame and sorrow to the very lips, exile me from the charity of my kind, pile on my bare head all the abuses and humiliations which human nature is capable of inflicting or enduring—my cry shall still and ever be for life, more life!

Though the wife of my youth should betray me again and again, though my children prove

false and dishonor my gray hairs, though my oldest, truest friends abandon me and I become a "fixed figure for the time of scorn to point his slow unmoving finger at",—still shall I cling to this boon of life—life—life!

For now I tell you, heart-burdened, weary and despairing ones, if only you will be patient a little longer and wait, life itself shall heal your every sorrow.

I give you this Gospel of Hope, this water of refreshing in the arid desert of your despair——

Life is the Healer, Life the Consoler, Life the Reconciler!

In earlier years I used to hear the most eloquent sermons on the blessedness of death, which always left me cold and unpersuaded. To such gloomy homilies is perhaps due the aversion I now feel toward most preaching. No! talk not to me of death, that ironic Phantom, that grisly Sophist by whose aid religion maintains the unworthiest part of its conquest. I hate and abominate from my deepest soul this plausive, solemn, unctuous, lying cant of darkness and the grave. He that preaches fears it as much as he that hears, and will move

heaven and earth to escape the inevitable doom. Away with such mummery!

Death in the ripe course of nature is beautiful and seemly, but death by disease, or violence, or accident, is horrible, for no man should be cheated or cheat himself of his due share of life. And this which is now an empty axiom shall one day be the highest law of a better state of society than we yet dream of, wherein disease shall be unknown and death by violence, public, private, or judicial, a thing without precedent.

My cry is for life—more life!

Look, ye impatient ones—I, too, have been down, down, down in those abysmal depths where hope is a mockery and the mercy of God despaired of; I have tasted the bitterness of betrayal by those most sacredly pledged to keep faith with me; I have known the uttermost treason of the heart; I have been made to feel that there was not one soul in all the living world joined to me by any true or lasting bond; I have seen the destruction of my own house of life, that temple of the soul, losing which a man is homeless on the earth.

And yet I rose out of this lowest hell of desolation, borne as I must believe by some late-

succoring, strong-winged Angel of Hope—and blessed God to see again the cheerful face of life!

Little children, little children, the end of all will come only too soon: why hasten it? The Master of Life has bidden you wait His summons. By my soul! I do not believe that He would harshly reprove you or turn away His face should you, under the goad of sorrows too great for endurance, come suddenly, unbidden, before Him. Yet were it better to stand firm like good soldiers and abide your call.

In other words, you are not to accept defeat. It is not that I would brand as coward the man who boldly pushes his way into the Unknown—the courage of that act is so appalling that men have named it madness. But it is a higher courage to resist the fates.

Yet—whisper!—I do not find it hard to believe that often God in His mercy shows this only way, this *via dolorosa,* to some poor lost soul, some victim of man's inhumanity, unable to struggle longer in the coils of fate.

To me the most awfully pathetic figure in a world sown with tragedy is the man or woman, broken on the cruel rack of life, who makes a desperate choice to find his or her way alone to

God. Though you plant no cross and raise no stone upon that grave, though you hide it away from the sight of men, I for one shall not deem it a grave of shame. I shall kneel there in spite of priestly anathemas; I shall pray for this poor child of earth sainted by suffering; my tears shall fall on the despised grave where rests,—oh, rests well at last,—one of the uncounted martyrs of humanity. Yes! I see in that nameless grave huddled away in the potter's field a symbol of the tragedy of this life whereunto we are called without our will and whence we must not depart save in the process of nature. And I will believe that God rejects the poor defeated one lying there when I, a mere human father, feel my heart turned to stone against the weakest and most erring of my children.

XX

GLORIA MUNDI

HAVE you ever really thought upon the beauty of this world which is passing away before your eyes? You have read the words, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear with hearing", but have you ever thought that they might bear another sense than the Holy Book gives them?

For my part, when I come to die I know what my chief regret will be. Not for my poor human sins, which have really hurt nobody save myself and most of which I will have forgotten. Not because I have missed the laurel which was the darling dream of my youth. Not because I have always fallen short of my ideal and, still worse, betrayed my own dearest hopes. Not for the selfish reason that I have never been able to gain that position of independence and security which would enable me to work with a free mind. Not for having failed to score in any one particular what the

world calls a success. Not for these nor any other of the vain desires that mock the human heart in its last agony.

No; I shall simply be sorry that I failed to enjoy so much of the beauty of this dear earth and sky, or even to mark it in my hurry through the days, my reckless pleasures, my stupid tasks that yielded me nothing. I shall think with utter bitterness of the time out of all the time given me I might have passed in profitably looking at the moon. Or in marking with an eye faithful to every sign, the advance of the bannered host of Summer unto the scattered and whistling disarray of Autumn. How many of those wonderful campaigns have I really *seen?*—alas! I know too well how many I have numbered.

There was a rapture of flowing water that always I was promising myself I should one day explore to the full; and now I am to die without knowing it. There were days and weeks and months of the universe in all its glory bidding for my admiration; yet I saw nothing of it all. My baser senses solicited me beyond the cosmic marvels. I lost in hours of sleep, or foolish pleasure, or useless labor, spectacles of beauty which the world had been

storing up for millions of ages—perhaps had not been able to produce before my brief day. I regret even the first years of life when the universe seemed only a pleasant garden to play in and the firmament a second roof for my father's house. Grown older but no wiser, I planned to watch the sky from dawn to sunset and, on another occasion, from sunset to dawn; but my courage or patience failed me even for this poor enterprise. I was a beggar at a feast of incomparable riches, and something always detained me from putting forth my hand; or I left the table which the high gods had spread and went eating husks with swine. And now I am to die hungry, self-robbed of my share at the banquet of immortal beauty—can Christian penitence find anything to equal the poignancy of such a regret? . . .

Yet even as I write I am cheating myself in the old bankrupt fashion, for the day outside my window is like a tremulous golden fire, and the world overflows with a torrent of green life —life that runs down from the fervid heaven and suspires through the pregnant earth. It is the first of June, when Nature, like a goddess wild with the pangs of delivery, moves the whole earth with her travail, filling every

bosom with the sweet and cruel pain of desire. Now she takes account of nothing that does not fecundate, conceive or produce, intent only upon securing her own immortal life. And though she has done this a million and a million ages, yet is she as keen of zest as ever; as avid for the full sum of her desire as when she first felt the hunger of love and life; as unwearied as on the morning of Creation.

"Put away your foolish task," she seems to say. "Yet a few days and it and you will both be ended and forgotten. Come out of doors and live, while the chance is left you. Come and learn the secret of the vital sap that is no less a marvel in the tiniest plant than in the race of man. If you can not learn that, I will teach you something else of value—the better that you ask me naught. Leave your silly books and come into the great green out-of-doors, swept clean by the elemental airs. Here shall you find the answer to your foolish question, 'What do we live for?'—Life . . . life . . . life!"

XXI

THE SPRING

IT IS the Spring again.

Not merely by the calendar, dear children of mine own age, but also, I would hope, by your hearts: to *that* Spring let us say our word of welcome.

I am writing on an early day in March. It is still Winter, so far as snow and blow, mere scenic illusion, goes: but a certain voiceless promise in the air unclothes the landscape of its remaining rigors and makes mock at the weather man's predictions. With the Spring at our doors we shall laugh to scorn the utmost rage of Boreas. Let him do his worst—he *must* go, and quickly too!

Yet I was not mindful of the Spring (for my thoughts were on a less cheerful business) until coming home t'other evening I noticed the lengthening of our brief twilight,—as if the day had been *pulled out one stop;* and standing to look at the sky, with its unwonted clear space

of radiance, there came a rush of vernal airs about my forehead, and I felt the fulness of the Spring within my heart.

Oh, may the Spring ever so come to me! . . .

Now though a man may not be so learned as Solomon in what some other inspired writer has called the "signs of Spring",—though he be indeed but a humble suburbanite and unblest amphibian, neither of city nor country, he may feel that the sun 'gins to be hot on the back along about noon. May see that the snow, melting off, leaves long pools in the road and common which give a cheerful brightness under the Spring sun. May note that the cock crows oftener and with a more resonant pipe than in the gray Winter dawns; that the sap is rising in the willow and maple, and the pioneer robin shows his red breast among the sparrows' brown. May mark within himself a stirring of sensations and desires long dormant as though the old Adam had turned in his sleep. May be conscious of that indefinable sense of expectancy brooding over all things betwixt earth and heaven, which heralds the rebirth of the year.

The Spring in truth has a tale of its own, and not the same tale for every man—like love

itself, ever the same, yet ever different. But of all its messages and portents I chiefly prize that strange quickening of the pulse, that fleeting, unaccountable rapture of the heart, that feeling as though one were at times an æolian harp played upon by mysterious airs,—a reed through which all things blow to music,—until you actually have to stop now and again when walking out-of-doors, the ravishment and delight of it being more than you can bear.

If you do not so feel the Spring, there is, I fear, no Spring for you.

No season discourseth so wisely and witchingly to the heart; none hath so much of that poignant, unutterable poetry for which all the poets have tuned their harps in vain. Most ancient of deceivers, her cuckoo note is aye potent to befool the world—not a wound, not a pang, not a sorrow is remembered in the healing smile of Spring.

The truth is, we are never so much in love with life as in the Spring. It involves the whole of life—a man counts his Springs, not his Winters or Summers. It is Nature's renewal and confirmation of her old promise to us, which each interprets in a jealous way he would not dare confess to his neighbor. How she

cheats us, and how we love the cheat! For let us but admit her subtle witchery a moment, and then (as sweet William hath it) our

> "state,
> Like to the lark at break of day arising
> From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate!"

Bankrupt in hope indeed is he to whom the Spring doth not fetch a new bravery of spirit, urging him to try another and a gayer hazard of fortune. Sick of a truth is he whose feeble lungs crow not with a specious health in these enchanted airs. Dim is the eye that fails to mark the cheerful lengthening of the days. Cold and dead the heart in which the Spring awakes not a dream of love.

As a man turns into middle life (sorely against his will) I think he is apt, on looking back, to regret chiefly the Springs he has left behind. If there were to be a seasonal restitution, I can promise for one man at least, that he would prefer certain Springs to a more than equal count of Summers. Early Springs I mean, of course; the wonder and romance of which pursue us as with a vain regret during all our after-life, so that we seem to be con-

stantly seeking the clew to some beautiful and marvellous story but half revealed to us in a dream.

For, in truth, the enchantment of those Springs, the loveliness and mystery and desire of them, deepen the more the farther we go back into our youth, until they seem but a confused yet delightful blowing of merry winds and a mere hide-and-seek of frolic sunshine; beyond which Garden of Faëry it is forbidden to pass.

Why a man should be more concerned to remember and treasure up his early Springs than his early Summers, this old child confesses himself unable to say.

But so he feels, without knowing the reason; and now more than ever, since the Spring hath again laid her hand upon him.

XXII

THE FIRST LOVE

In dreams she grows not older
The lands of dream among,
Though all the world wax colder,
Though all the songs be sung;
In dreams doth he behold her
Still fair and kind and young.

ANDREW LANG

A MAN never forgets his first love, however early in life it may have come to him; through all the ensuing years he bears this precious blue flower of the heart. Even amid the storms of later passion, or the tranquil joys of an assured love, it keeps its unseen, mysterious, marvellous life. However the heart may burn, it still has dew enough for this unfading blossom; however happy and content it may be in another love, yet has it a secret longing which only this can appease. Aye, though the heart itself be as a temple

consecrated to another woman, where Love as a priest offers perpetual sacrifice, yet shall you find, deep hidden within its shrine of shrines, a tiny white pyx holding the sacred Host, the imperishable dream of the first passion. . . .

Is it not astonishing how early we begin to love,—as if Nature had no other use for us? I can scarcely remember a time, however distant in my childhood, when I was not in love with somebody. Ah, do not think those earliest troubles of the heart are to be smiled at as children's play. Innocent though they were, what exquisite sweet pain they caused us! What cruel unhappiness, since to be young and unhappy seems a special malignancy of fate! What ineffable longings, that our childish minds vainly sought to understand! What torments of jealousy, which the storms of mature passion have been impotent to efface!

Mamie! The name will never lose its magic for me, and to the end it will continue to be whispered from my dreams. And to think I have now a daughter older than she was when I first saw and loved her. O time the inexorable! . . .

She was twelve and I was sixteen when we

tasted together the poignant sweets of young passion, the delicious fruit of that one forbidden tree in the earthly Eden which to eat and enjoy, humanity will ever gladly face exile and death.

Yet Mamie was only a little girl just entering her teens, though developed like a child madonna, and, as I was to know, with feelings beyond her years. I have never seen anything like the proud beauty of her face with its glorious hazel eyes, rich brown and red cheek like a ripe fruit, and scarlet sensitive mouth, all framed in a setting of dark auburn hair.

I pause to smile a little at this fervid description, but you will understand that I am trying to look into the Boy's heart and to write what I find there. That this Fairy Princess of love was only a little household drudge, kept from school and slaving all day for her large German mother married the second time to a small German tailor, who had by this said mother a younger daughter of his own, for whom he evinced an unpleasing preference,—these things may hold well enough together in a world of hard facts, but the Boy saw them through the lens of his romantic imagination. And so complete was the illusion that after

more than twenty-five years the Man cannot easily shake it off.

The very beginning of it I can't remember—perhaps we never do recall those first obscure intimations of a passion. I have a delicious but confused memory of long evening walks with her and the little sister—*she,* as I recollect with an old pang, was nearly always with us. It was summer and the place was an old New England town with a narrow river spanned by quaint bridges flowing through the midst of it. I have known love since,—ah me! —and real passion, the kind that consumes a man's life as flame licks up oil; but never again have I known anything to compare with that young dream.

Crossing one of these bridges on a certain evening sacred to the angels of Memory and Joy, the little sister stopped behind not more than a minute to tie her shoe; and we had our first kiss! (The Man trembles at the remembrance.) I did not ask for it—I feared her, that is, loved her too much; and she knew no more of coquetry than a babe. So far as I can be sure, the impulse was at once mutual, natural and irresistible. O clinging dewy mouth! O young heart fluttering wildly

against mine!—when have I ever drunk at so pure a fount of joy! . . .

After that our evening walks were mostly made up of kisses, for the little sister (she was nine) had to be let into the secret, and as I recall with some surprise, she never betrayed us. This was the more to her credit, seeing that she was only a half-sister and the favorite child. But not even a little girl of nine can bear to see another getting all the kisses, and so she would be vexed sometimes and cry pettishly, "Oh kiss, kiss!—why don't you get married?" Then I would appease her with candy or a promise of something nice,—and we would enjoy our subsequent kisses all the more for the little interruption. O far years, wafting to me a faint scent of lilac! O youth that is no more! . . .

This lasted a whole summer,—the only entire season, the Man freely admits, that he ever passed in Paradise. Could he now go back through the crowding years, I am very sure that he would make a bee-line for that old New England town, and with a heart thumping in his throat, look for a beloved little figure on one of the quaint bridges in the summer gloaming.

Here the Boy tugs at my sleeve and asks me not to tell the prosaic occasion of those twilight walks with Mamie and little sister; the same being that the little tailor sent them every night but Sunday (ah, those heart-hungry Sunday nights!) for a pint of beer, and often chided them for bringing it home flat. He, the Boy, is quite sullen when I try to make him understand that this homely detail but adds to the pathos of his romance. Stubborn Boy indeed . . . and the Man not so much better!

I had to leave the little town at the end of that summer of love, and so suddenly that there was no chance to bid her good-bye. Once again, and only once, I saw her afterward, when about two years later I visited the place. On our dear bridge, too, and with little sister grown formidably larger and more knowing. She came defiantly between us at once, and I saw with a sinking heart that we dared not renew the old love-making. Mamie was taller, paler and, as I thought,—I mean the Boy,—lovely as an angel. I scarcely remember a word that she said to me—the constraint of the sister's presence checked us both. I think she was chilled too by the fact that my visit was to be only for a few days; and she doubtless real-

ized the truth, that I was passing out of her life. Never have I been more wretched than during that last walk with Mamie.

On leaving her I mustered up my courage and ignoring little sister, whose eyes were bright with malice, offered to kiss her. She turned her cheek toward me, saying calmly: "I am going to be confirmed on Sunday".

That cold kiss is my last memory of Mamie, of the warm loving child-woman whose mere name, seen or heard, causes my heart to thrill as when a boy. I never saw her again. . . .

Where is she now? God knows: yet in no worse place, I trust, than that consoling heaven of our dreams where the precious things of the heart that we have lost in our journey through life are restored to us; and most dear and precious of all, our first love.

XXIII

SEEING THE OLD TOWN

I'VE been back seeing the old town. The old town where I served the first years of my hard apprenticeship to life—alas! not yet completed. The old town where, as a boy, I dreamed those bright early dreams whose fading into gray futility makes the dull burden of every man's regret.

It may be that my dreams were more varied and fantastic than those of the average younker, for I was the fool o' fancy, with a poet's wild heart in my breast. God knows what I promised myself in that long-vanished time of youth which yet was instantly vivified and present to me as I trod the streets of the old town. I felt like one about to see a ghost —the ghost of my young self; and I shrank consciously from meeting it, with this bitter-sweet pang of disillusion at my heart. I could not more sensibly have feared a living presence. Alas, what one of us all is worthy, after the

heavy account of years, to confront the ghost of his candid youth?—what one but must bow the head before that pitying yet reproachful Memory?

This feeling took such strong hold upon me that soon I hastened away from the too familiar squares and corners, so poignantly reminiscent of that other *Me,* and went to the hotel facing Main Street. But even here, seated at a window and elbowed by a group of story-swapping drummers, I could not free myself from the spell of old memories. Youth with its hundred voices cried to me; the past and the present became at once strangely confused, yet separable; and I was set to the painful task of tracing and identifying my younger self in the crowd of passers-by.

And I did find that boy again—oh yes! I did find him in spite of the lapse of many changing years and all that Time had wrought within and without me since he and I were one. I found him, though he was long shy and hesitated to come out of the shadows; holding back timidly and looking on me with tender yet doubtful eyes—ah God! I knew *whence* the doubt. But at last he came fully, careless of the roaring drummers or knowing himself to

be unseen; and I held his hand in mine, while a sweet sorrow beat against my heart in the thought of what might have been and now could never be. And after the kind relief of tears, we talked in whispers a long time there by the window, no one noticing us; and ere he went back into the shadow he touched my forehead lightly with his lips, leaving me as one whom God has assoiled. . . .

The old town was but little changed, only it seemed smaller, like all places we have known in our youth and been long absent from. The Main street, where the working boys and girls flirt and promenade in an endless chain, still slouched the whole length of the town, with the railroad between it and the river; no difference, except that it was better paved than in my time, and the clanging trolleys ran instead of the ancient bob-tailed horse cars. There were a few new shops or strange names over the old ones—no other changes of consequence. The same old town!—the boy of twenty years ago would not have been phased in the least.

But I was, and the fact was due to the changes which Time had written upon so many faces I had known; fair young girls turned into full-blown matrons, vaunting their offspring

with no lack of words, or withered old maids looking askance and shrinking from recognition; striplings who had shot up into solid manhood, and whom you were puzzled to place; broken old men whom you recalled in their vigorous prime; all the varied human derelicts of the storm and stress of twenty years. Oh, it makes a man bethink himself to watch the procession go by in the old town.

Certainly, if you wish to get a true line on yourself, go back to the old town. Nothing else will do the trick. Your glass is a liar leagued with your vanity. Your wife a loving flatterer who says the thing that is not. Your children will never tell you how old you are beginning to look. Your daily intimates and coevals are concerned to keep up the same illusion for themselves. You deceive yourself, know it, and are happy in the deception. There is only one way for you to learn the "bitter, wholesome truth", or, in other words, to get a fair look at the clock—go back to the old town!

There is some humor, too, in going back, as I find from my visits at an interval of five or six years. Always I am most heartily and noisily greeted by men who have no use for me

except to "knock" me, whom the sight or sound of my name exasperates, to whom my tiny bit of success is poison, and who struggle on bravely with the hope of seeing me finally land where I deserve to be and am, as they fervently believe, irretrievably headed. We do each other good, for if I were to die, these men would lose one of the sweetest motives of their existence; and I, knowing this, am eager to live on and disappoint them.

Last time I went back I saw one of these friendly fellows at a distance of a block, and he kept his glad hand out at the risk of paralysis, until we came together. Then how he laughed with pleasure, and my goodness, what a grip he gave me! I had to laugh with him and return his grip, so far as my feeble strength would allow. In an acquaintance of over twenty years this fellow had never offered me the slightest proof of his friendship, save, as I have said, to "knock" me; and now a dear friend of mine hung modestly back while *he* crushed me in his iron embrace. When I was going away at the end of my visit, this terrible enemy came to the nine o'clock train to see me off and spoiled the leave-taking of my real friends. There is irony of the same brand

elsewhere, but you will not see it to such naked advantage as in the old town. . . .

The saddest experience one can have in revisiting the old town is to hear suddenly of the death of some friend of one's youth, who though separated from one by long years of absence, must ever share in the romance of that enchanted period. I was so to learn of the loss of a friend who had been very dear to me in the old days. Together we had trudged the Main Street of the old town, by night and by day, making plans for the future, few of which were realized either for him or for me.

The friendships of youth are sacred. Mature life has nothing to offer in their place. Men agree to like each other for social or business reasons; often, paradoxically, because they fear each other. The heart is not touched in this hollow alliance—it is a pact of interest and selfishness. Youth and trust, age and cynicism —thus are they paired.

I know well that one or two young friendships or frank elections of the heart have yielded me much of the pain and thrill and rapture of that sentiment between the sexes which we call love. I know that I was several years older ere the voice of a girl had leave to

thrill me like the tone of this dear lost friend; that I suffered as keenly during an occasional boyish miff with him as in my first genuine love quarrels; that I would have risked life and limb to please him, and could conceive of nothing sweeter than his praise; that I can not think of him even now without a pain at the heart which I have not the skill to analyze. And though I saw little of him for many years, and there was no attempt to follow up our ancient friendship—our paths lying wide apart in every sense—and though he died a man of middle age, I can but think of him—taking no note at all of the years that lie between—as a bright-haired, laughing youth; and so mourn him with a sorrow of the heart which proves a silent witness *there* during all the years to the truth of our early affection.

There is something divine, though we but dimly glimpse it, in the unavowed, almost unconscious persistence of these sacred ties of our youth, these precious legacies from the days that are no more, whose light shines with a white lustre that belongs to them alone.

Sleep well, my friend! . . .

I was not sorry to have seen the old town again, though it gave me but a sad pleasure at

best, and I was glad when my short leave was up. And yet that singular thrill of walking where once you knew and were known of everybody, and where still, because of some slight rumors from the great outlying world, a flattering village curiosity attends you, is worth going a long journey to feel.

To say nothing of your joyous enemy who hails you with stentorian shout and glad hand extended, on your arrival, and likewise dismisses you on your departure with curses not loud but deep. And the many things you see and hear and feel which, without compliment, certify you to yourself as you really are!

XXIV

PULVIS ET UMBRA

NO sadder message comes to a writer in the course of a year than the news of some friendly though unknown reader's death. Often you learn it only through the return of the magazine, with the single word "Deceased" written across the wrapper. It is a word to give one pause, however engrossing the present occupation. Here was a man or woman who, though personally unknown to you, was yet, it may be, in spiritual touch with you—perhaps the best friendship of all. For him or her you wrote your thoughts—since all writing is to an unseen but not unfamiliar audience; for him or her you told the story of your own mind and heart, sure of a kindly understanding and sympathy—without this assurance, believe me, there would be little enough writing in the world. Every writer's message is conditioned—I would almost say dictated—by this invisible but closely judging auditory. You get to know what your

readers expect, and this in the main you try to give them, though often failing the mark. So the act of writing is a kind of tacit covenant and coöperation between the writer and his public. Indeed, it is not I but *you* who hold the pen; or rather it is I who hold it but you who *speak* through it and through me.

This relation being understood, it is but natural that a writer should feel a sense of grief and loss on hearing of the death of someone who held him to this communion of thought and spirit. I am not sure that this grief would be more genuine had he personally known the lost one—our finest friendships, like the old classic divinities, veil themselves in a cloud. We wear ourselves out trying to maintain the common friendships of the house and street, and it is like matching faces with Proteus: in the end we become indifferent—or wise.

But here was one whom you never saw—who lived half the length of the continent from you, or perhaps in the next town—no matter, you two had never met in the body. Your word did, however, come to him and called forth a genial response; he let you know that so far as you went he set foot with you. Thencefor-

ward, you marched the more boldly, getting grace and courage and authority from this one's silent friendship and approval. You figured him as one who stood afar off—too far for you to see his face—and waved you a cheery salute; your soul hailed a fellow pilgrim. Now comes the word that he can go no further with you—rather, indeed, that he has outstripped your laggard pace and gone forward on the great Journey. You learn of his departure in the chance way I have mentioned —not being a friend in the conventional sense, the family do not think to send you any message or mourning card. You have but to feel that you are poorer by a friendship of the soul than you were yesterday; that you are going on, in a sense, alone and unsupported, for this friend was a host; that you are not to look ever again for his written word of praise, which brought such gladness to your heart, or his delicate counsel that often helped you to a clearer vision of things. The silent compact is dissolved. . . .

Life is a blessing, and death is no less.

That which we call the common lot is the rarest lot. Love and loss and grief are for all.

Of two men, one who loves and one who has loved and lost, the second is the richer: God has given him the better part—he holds both of earth and Heaven.

The love that has known no loss is wholly selfish and human. Death alone sanctifies.

Who has not lain down at night saying unto himself, "Now is the solemn hour when my own shall come back to me",—has not sounded the shoreless sea of love.

I believe in life and I believe not less profoundly in death.

I believe in a resurrection and a restoration —we can not lose our own.

No man has ever yet found tongue to tell the things that death has taught him. No man dare reveal them fully—'tis a covenant with Silence.

A power that strikes us to our knees with infinite sorrow and a yearning that would reach beyond the grave, must be a Power Benign.

Life divides and estranges: Death reunites and reconciles: Blessed be Death!

"Your friend is dead!" they told me, but I did not believe nor understand.

Then they led me to a darkened room, hushed and solemn amid the roar of New York, where I saw him lying in a strange yet beautiful serenity.

No disfigurement of his manly comeliness; no trace of a struggle that had convulsed the watchers with pain only less than his.

Roses on his manly breast—roses rich and lush as the young life that had sunk into a sleep so sudden, so unlooked for.

Nothing to shock, nothing to appal in this wordless greeting to the friends of his heart. As ever in life, his personality took and held us in its strong toil of grace—yes, more than ever held us now closely his own.

Could this indeed be death?

Ah, many a time had I hastened with joyous anticipation to meet him, but never had we kept a tryst like this.

I clasped that hand whose touch so often had thrilled me with its kindness—oh, hand so strong and gentle of my best-loved friend! It was not cold as I feared it would be, and surely a pulse answered to mine—he knew, oh, yes! he knew that I was there.

I kissed his calm forehead and felt no chill of death—no terror at the heart. He seemed

but to lie in a breathless sleep that yet held a profound consciousness of our presence.

Still, they said he was dead,—he so tranquil, almost smiling and inscrutably attentive!—and the grief of women challenged my own tears to flow.

Yet, with my emotions tense as a bow drawn to the head, I could not weep; so was I held by this wonder and majesty they called death. And it seemed that he did not ask my tears in the ineffable peace of our last meeting,—no, not my tears. But there was a gathering up of the heart which I had never known before, a bringing together by Memory, the faithful warder, of all that had made or ministered to our friendship,—kind looks and tones, trifles light as air mingled with graver matters, a country walk, a sea voyage, books that we had read together, snatches of talk, mutual pleasures, mutual interests, a hundred proofs of brotherly affection and sympathy,—so Memory ran searching the years till the sum of my love and my loss lay before me.

Did he know?—did he feel? Scarcely I dared to ask myself when the Silence breathed Yes! . . .

Here at my elbow is the telephone into which

I could summon his pleasant voice at will. It was but now we were talking and making happy plans together—I had no plans without him.

Then there was a blank, and a strange voice, vibrant with pain, called me up and said. . . .

Oh, God!—it can not be true! He a giant in his youth and strength; he with his vast enjoyment of life, every nerve and muscle of him trained to the fullest energy; he struck down, without a note of warning, in the vigor of his triumphant manhood, while the old, the sickly and the imperfect live on?—No, no—this were not death, but sacrifice.

Why, it was but yesterday I felt the vital grasp of his hand; listened to his brave talk, so genial a reflex of his mind and spirit; basked in the brightness of his frank smile,—debtor as ever I was to his flowing kindness; drank the cordial of his living presence, and took no thought of fate.

And now they tell me he is dead—that from our account of life, this long sum of days and hours so dreary without him, he is gone forever! Over and over must I say this, or hear the dull refrain from others; yet the truth will not press home.

For, in spite of the dread certainty, I am not

always without hope of seeing him again in the pleasant ways of life where often we met together; where never we parted but with a joyous promise soon to meet again.

This hope would be stronger, I now feel, had I not looked upon him in that strange peacefulness that was yet so compelling; and sometimes I wish they had not led me there.

So hard is it to break with the dear habit of life—so reluctant the heart to believe that the silver cord has been loosed which bound it to another.

Oh, my lost friend! . . .

The watchers told me that they had never seen so brave a struggle for life. Time and again he grappled with the Destroyer, like the strong athlete he was—yes, and often it seemed that his dauntless heart would prevail. But alas! the fates willed otherwise.

Then at last, when hope was gone, as he read in the tearful eyes of those about him, he threw up his right hand with a lamentable gesture, saying,—"That's all!"

Not *all,* brave and true heart, for love can not lose its own, and thy defeat was still a victory. Thou livest now more than ever in the memory of those who gave thee love for love,

yet ever lacked of thy abounding measure; to them shalt thou ever appear as when thou didst fall asleep in the glory of thy youth and strength; age can not lay its cold hand upon thee, and thy beloved, dying old mayhap, shall again find thee young.

In that sweet hope, dear Friend of my heart, and until *then*—farewell, farewell!

XXV

SHADOWS

WE are shadows all and shadows we pursue. This business of life which we make-believe to take so earnestly, —what is it but a moth-chase or the play of grotesques in a child's magic lantern? A sudden helter-skelter of light and shade, a comic jumble of figures thrown for a moment on the screen, and then,—darkness!

Children of the shadow, to that Shadow we return at last; but the very essence of our life is fluid, evanishing always. The minute, the day, the hour, the year,—who can lay hands on them?—and yet in our humorous fashion we speak of these as fixed and stable things, subject to our control. Meantime and all time, dream delivers us unto dream, while life lends to its most tangible aspects something shadowy and spectral, as the vapors clothe the horizon with mystery. The things we call realities, in our vain phrase, that enter most deeply into the

warp of our lives, these are also dream-stuff, kindred of the Shadow. Our consciousness, from which we dare to apprehend immortality, can only look backward into the realm of dream and shadow, or forward into the realm of shadow and dream. I am at this moment more stricken at the heart with the sorrow of a song that my mother crooned to me, a child, in the firelight many years ago, than with all the griefs I have since known. Shadows, all shadows! With my house full of romping, laughing children, there falls now upon my heart the tiny shadow of a lost babe—and I beat helpless hands against the iron mystery of death. . . .

But the living, too, are shadows, not less pitiable than they whom death has taken from our sight. Nay, it is more sad to be the shadow of a shadow than to clasp the final darkness.

Tell me, O dear love, where now is the face that once showed me all the heaven I cared to know, the form that made the rapture of my youth, the spell which filled my breast with delicious pain, the lips whose touch so coy, so rarely gained, was honey and myrrh and wine? Oh, say not that *she,* too, is of the Shadow!—

Nay, she is here at thy side and has never

left thee, but is in all things the same—look again! Alas! this is not the face that charmed my youth, this is not the form that filled my dreams—and *her* eyes were clear as the well-springs of Paradise. But oh, for pity of it, let not my poor love know that her dear enrapturing self, with our precious dream in which we drew down heaven to earth, is gone forever into the Shadow.

We are shadows all, living ghosts, so slight of memory and consciousness that we seem to die many deaths ere the final one. This illusion we name life is intermittent—hardly can we recall what happened day before yesterday. Even the great events of life (as we phrase them) do but feebly stamp our weak consciousness. By a fiction which everyone knows to be false, we make a pretence of feeling much and deeply. 'Tis a handsome compliment to our common nature, but the truth is we rarely *feel*—our substance is too thin and ghost-like.

As shadows we fly by each other and are never really in contact. This is the profound deception of love, the pathos of the human tragedy. The forms we would clasp make themselves thin air; we strain at a vacuum and a shade—aye, in the most sacred embraces of love

we hold—nothing! Less hard is it to scale the walls of heaven than to compass our desire. But now at last we are to be satisfied, to have our fill of this dear presence which spells for us the yearning and mystery of love:—alas! in the very rapture of possession we feel the eternal cheat.

Yet while we lament ever that we can not lay hands on those we love, shadows that we are, no more sure are we of ourselves. This shadow of me eludes even myself as I am eluded by the shadows of others in the great phantasmal show around me. I know this shadow of me, volatile, uncertain, ever escaping from under the hand, and if I were not so busy chasing my own shadow—the evanescent Me—I should have more leisure for hunting other moths and shadows. The old Greeks figured this change and fugacity in the mythic Proteus; but they missed the deeper sense of it.

There was a shadow of me last year that I had some cause of quarrel with and we parted unkindly. Where is it?—gone forever. Wiser now, I would gladly make peace with that shadow—it meant honestly, I must confess, though often it sinned and blundered—but never more will it walk the earth. Other

shadows of me have likewise escaped, leaving similar accounts unsettled (they never do put their affairs in order)—not to be settled now, I dare say, until the Great Audit.

I would not care to recall all those shadows of myself, even had I the power, as I would not wish to live my life over again without leave to change it (he is a fool or a liar who says otherwise). But I may confess a weakness for One that vanished long ago, leaving me too soon: a shadow of youthful hope and high purpose that could do much to refresh this jaded heart, dared I but look upon it. Oh, kind Master of the Show, grant me once more to see that shadow on the screen! Unworthy as I am, let me look on it again and strive to gather new hope from its imperishable store. I know it dreamed of a holier love than I have realized; of nobler aims than I have had strength to reach; of crowns and triumphs that I shall never claim. It believed only in good (God knows!) and since it left me, without any cause that I can remember, I have known much evil. Yet it is still the essential *Me,* soul of my soul, and so must it be through the eternities. I can not be separated from that Brightness, that Innocency, that Hopefulness which

once I was—call it back for but an instant to give peace to my soul!

Vain appeal!—A shadow calling unto the Shadow.

XXVI

THE GREAT REDEMPTION

I WAS born in fear, but that was not the beginning, for in fear my mother had conceived me, and during the period before my birth, often I felt her heart tremble with fear. But even that was not the beginning—oh, far from it. I feel within me the fear of remote generations, dim, shadowy, formless, vague; yet having the power to dominate and oppress me. Fearful inheritance, to have to struggle with terrors bequeathed by the dead! In dreams especially they assert their terrible sway over me, filling my brain with a phantasmagoria of horror, robbing my nights of peaceful rest, so that often the morning finds me weak, shattered, unrefreshed, and burdened with a nameless fear.

My parents worshipped the One True God, the *God of Fear,* and as a child I was always taken to church in order that my mind might receive indelible impressions of the faith which

held them in terror. There was beauty in the church, in the many-hued windows with majestic aureoled figures, in the sacred statues with gold and jewelled crowns, in the marble altar with its hovering cloud of angels, and especially in the slow illumination thereof, candle by candle, until it became a solid blaze of light. I loved to see the young acolytes in their gowns, some of them as lovely as the marble seraphim; to watch the silent, marshalled order with which they attended an awe-inspiring figure clothed in gorgeous vestments; to hear at intervals their shrill, sweet young voices, rising above the deep note of the organ and responding to the priest in words which I understood not, but which I thought must be the language of Heaven; to smell the strange sweet odor of incense, and to see the communicants in white dresses leave the altar with bowed heads and clasped hands, looking like a company of the Shining Ones:—all this could not but mark a child's mind and soul with an abiding remembrance.

Alas, for me it was spoiled by the terrible sermons which the priest so often preached in those days, on Hell and the punishment of the Damned. There was one priest with a strong,

rolling voice and an appearance of awful sincerity, who commonly chose this theme and whose words I shall never forget. How convincingly he simulated the anger of his terrible God! How movingly he depicted the pains and tortures of the Infernal Place! "Think, dear children," he would cry to us, "think but a moment on the pains of Hell. Mind cannot conceive it; tongue cannot utter it. If you touch the tip of your finger to a red-hot coal for but an instant, less than a second, what pain you suffer! Less than a second, mark you! Then think of this agony multiplied a thousand thousand times, and continued through all eternity, forever and ever! The pain never to be assuaged, and the punishment never to cease!" . . .

It seemed to me, as I heard him, that Hell opened before my eyes, and I saw the very horrors he portrayed.

This priest was an honest man; he believed to the full extent what he told us; he was simply fulfilling a duty to his God of Fear. The cost of raising such awful images before childish minds, and filling childish hearts with such enduring terrors, was perhaps never considered by him; was no part of his priestly business. I

should be glad to argue the point with him, could I now see him anywhere, save in my dreams. . . .

But fear is not confined to what we call Religion or to the worship of a terrible Something in the sky; in one shape or another, it dogs life at every turn. No man, if he would confess the truth, ever lived a whole hour without fear. In order to maintain fear in the world, the human race has entered into a universal conspiracy which is ironically dubbed, "Civilization".

Government, taking pattern from Religion, is a thing of fear, with a soldier at the base and a king at the top! Fear props every throne, writes every statute, and gives to every mummified injustice, the sanction of Law.

The world awaits its true Saviour—him who shall deliver it from fear. In our time, we shall not see him, but he is coming, oh yes, coming, sure as hope has lived along with fear during a myriad years.

Mankind has once been redeemed, we are taught, but alas! the fruits of that redemption are not for this world. Here the shadow and the oppression of fear have lifted but a very little for some races, and for others, not at all.

What a glorious hope, to bequeath to our children a world without fear?

It is, alas! only too true that mankind, in their present estate, cannot even imagine A UNIVERSE WITHOUT TERROR, and, strange to say, they would be utterly *afraid* to think of it. But that will become easy for them on the day they cast away their worship of the OLD GOD OF FEAR!

XXVII

SURSUM CORDA

THERE is a brief Latin saying which holds in two words, the best philosophy of the human race. It is, *Sursum corda*—lift up your hearts!

Why despair of this world? All the joy you have ever known has been here. It is true there may be better beyond, but as Thoreau said, "One world at a time!"

And now let us reason a little. Are you sure you have given the world a fair trial—or rather have you let it give you a fair trial? Softly now; the first words will not do to answer this question—remember it is not I who interrogate, but your fate.

Can you expect anything but failure when you lie down and accept defeat in advance? Anything but sorrow when you set your house for mourning? Anything but rejection when you carry dismay in your face, telling all the world of your hope forlorn?

I went to my friend asking cheerily and confidently for a thing that seemed hopeless: smiling and without a second thought, he gave me what I asked. Again I went to my friend asking humbly and with little heart of grace for a thing that I yet knew was hopeful: frowning he denied my prayer. With what brow thou askest shalt thou be answered.

Lift up your hearts!

A word in your ear: Have you ever had a trouble or a sorrow that would for a moment weigh with the sure knowledge that you were to die next week, next month, next year? Be honest now! . . .

A little while ago I was very ill, and it seemed to me that if only I could get up from my bed, nothing ever would trouble me again. Well, in time I was able to get up, and then the old worries came sneaking back, one after another. Even as I write, they are grinning and mowing at my elbow, telling me that my work is futile. I know I am happy and well now, but they are always trying to persuade me to the contrary. I know that my hope was never so reasoned and strong, the future never so gravely alluring; but they will have it that I am an utter bankrupt in my hopes and the

way onward closed to me. I know my friends —my real friends—were never more true and fond and faithful than they are to-day—*they* whisper darkly of broken faith, evil suspicion, and the treason of the soul.

Out upon the liars! It is I that am in fault to give them a moment's hearing. The broken faith, the treason, the distrust—if any such there be—are mine alone; for in my own breast were these serpents hatched, and the poison I drink is of my own brewing.

Lift up your hearts!

Hast thou no cause to be happy?—look well now. Thou wast sick and thou art now whole. Weary, thou didst lay down a beloved task, not hoping ever to take it up again; yet see! it is in thy hands. Is not the wife of thy youth ever with thee, still fair and kind and blooming? Thou dreamest a haggard dream of poverty, while thy house is filled with the divine riches of love and ringing with the joyous mirth of thy children. The musicians of hope pipe to thee and thou wilt not dance; victory smiles on thee anear, and thou wilt think only of defeat. Look!—it is but a little way and thou droopest with the long wished-for haven in sight. . . .

Lift up your hearts!

Yesterday the æolian harp was silent all day in the window, not a fugitive air wooing it to music. To-day it is wild with melody from every wind of the world. So shall the brave music of thy hopes be renewed.

Have no care of the silent, barren yesterdays—they are only good to carry away all your mistakes, all your maimed purposes, all your vain brooding, all your weak irresolution, all your cowardice. Concentrate on TO-DAY and your soul shall be strong to meet To-morrow. Hope, Courage, Energy—and YOU!—against whatever odds. . . .

Lift up your hearts!

XXVIII

HOPE

HAST ever been in Hell, dear child of God? Hast fallen down—down—down to those rayless depths where thou couldst no longer feel the supporting hand of God, and where thou didst seem to taste the agony of the last abandonment? Hast known that ultimate remorse wherein the soul executes judgment on herself—true image it may be of the Last Judgment—that night of the spirit whence hope and blessedness seem to have utterly departed? Hast known all this, dear child of God, not once but many times? —nay, livest thou in a constant dread expectation of knowing this again and again, so long as thy soul liveth? Then, be of good hope, for thou art indeed a Child of God!

There may be many ways of winning Heaven, dear heart, but this is of the surest—to know and *feel* Hell in this world. And the more terribly thou comest to realize in thy spirit the

horror and desolation of Hell even in this mortal sojourn, the better approved is thine heirship in the Kingdom. For when thy feet take hold on Hell, then of a truth thy hope is high as Heaven!

This too, forget not, is the trial and test of all fine souls—saints of God, martyrs of humanity, the great mystics and dreamers, the chosen of our race, whose names partake of the eternal life and glory of the stars. Wouldst thou be of a better company? All these great victorious souls had known Hell to its uttermost depths, had tasted its most bitter anguish, had suffered its most fearful agonies, had drunk the cup of its awful despair, and had cried out under the burthen of doom, like Him on the Cross, that their God had forsaken them. Yet all were sons of God and proved their title by conquering Hell in this world.

Even as they fought the good fight and prevailed, so shalt thou, brave heart. Be glad and rejoice that thou art called upon to endure the same great trial, as being worthy of their fellowship. Thy deep-dwelling sorrows, thine agonies of spirit,—nay, thy wrestling with Powers of Darkness and all the supra-mortal

venture of thy soul which thou deemest laid upon thee as a curse,—do but seal and stamp thee God's darling. For none can reach the heights who has not known the depths, and though the Kingdom of Heaven be not of this world, most surely is the Kingdom of Hell. . . .

Courage, dear child of God!

XXIX

IDEAL

YES, dear, do you go on sending me those sweet messages full of praise, and hope, and inspiration, holding always before me the Ideal, keeping me to the plane of my better self. I may not feel that I deserve a tenth part of your faith in me—no matter, some day I shall be worthy of your praise. And even though I should never reach the summit of your appreciation, still the glory will be yours of having urged me to the endeavor. You are the height and I am the depth; you are the star shining in the Infinite and I the poor vainly aspiring worm on the earth below: yet in some fortunate hour I may be lifted to you.

For we do not make the supreme effort of our souls for the many, but for the few,—nay, oftenest of all, for the One! When I am at my best, you know well that I am writing for you alone; when I am at my worst, it is because

I can not rise to the thought of you. Even so my soul is often silent for days, giving me no message from the Infinite, no hint of its kinship to the stars, no whisper of the life it led before this life and the life it shall lead after this. I sometimes think *you are my soul!*

But help me—help me always, no matter how often and how far I may fall below your hope of me. Still reach me your kind hand which has power to save me from the last gulf; still say those words of grace and cheer for which I hunger the more, the more that I feel my unworthiness. I will read them over and over until I make myself believe that I really deserve them. Some day, be sure, I will utterly free myself from my baser self and live only for you. I will be your Sir Galahad, and my strength of soul shall be as the strength of ten. I will dedicate every thought to you and I will write for you alone—then must I at last be worthy of your praise in which the few or the many will have no part. I will no longer give out my truth to hire, or shame the Divinity in my breast, or care only to move the laughter of the crowd. I will write a book only for you, and you shall be here, as now, looking over my shoulder as I write, and giving me fresh inspi-

ration whenever my thought fails. Neither the few nor the many shall see this book—it will be for you and me alone. We shall love it greatly for having written it together and because it will be forever sacred to us two. I have already thought of a title for this book —we shall call it the "Story of a Man who Lost but afterward Found his Soul".

Turn now your dear face to the light—for my lamp wanes and I have sat far into the night—that I may see the look of praise upon it that has cheered so many a task of mine; that I may renew my worn spirit in the eternal peace of those calm eyes.

Tell me,—oh, tell me the truth, I beseech you,—*are you my soul!*

XXX

LITTLE MOTHER

IN almost every large family there is one devoted girl who stands ready to take the mother's place and to whom the younger ones turn with a sure trust and affection. Of all the household virtues—the sacred incommunicable things of hearth and home—I know of nothing quite so beautiful as this.

All deep and genuine love is of the essence of sacrifice. Who has not suffered the martyrdom of the heart has never known love. But how touching is this abnegation, this heroism that springs from we know not what depths of human nature, when seen in one whose eyes still look at you with the candid innocence of childhood! Oh, men and women, tell me not that Heaven itself can show a lovelier thing. . . .

And musing on it, there rises before me a little face and figure, most dear from all the woven ties of race and blood and memory;—a

little face that you might deem plain enough, but which is beautiful to me with its quiet brow and steady, thoughtful eyes still misted with the hopes and dreams of youth.

She puts a small hand in mine and leads me back over the years—years of which, God knows, I took but little heed in their passage. And I see her always the same yet always younger, hushing to sleep other little faces strangely like hers, mothering one tot after another, lavishing upon them the artless love and praise she should have given her dolls—alas, these were the only dolls she ever really knew; coaxing them over the first pitfalls of infancy, caring for them with a pitiably premature wisdom—aye, and sometimes bravely battling for them with the urchins of the street, forgetting her tears until the peril was past.

I see resting his pale cheek on her young breast—a child nursing a child!—one that too soon grew weary and left us. But her arms are empty only a moment, for even as I look, another babe is there. And I wonder, with a painful sense of ingratitude, that I should never have reckoned this treasure at its worth; that I should have been blind to so much that was beyond price in the little humble world

about me; that there was a heavy debt against me on behalf of this child which I could never repay.

Something of this I try to say to her in stumbling words, nor caring to keep back the tears. But she hushes me with a touch on the cheek and an intensity of the quiet look habitual with her. And now she leads me back through the long nursery of years; past little beds where rosy health slumbered, clasping its toys, or pale sickness lay feverishly awake; past all the scenes wherein her brave young heart was schooled and she became a woman whilst yet a child; past the lightly regretted dolls and her childish air-castles always tumbled topsy-turvy by those tiny baby hands —back into the present where, almost a young woman now, she smiles joyously at me, holding up the youngest in her arms! . . .

Oh little mother, blessed be you and all your sisters the wide earth over that worthily bear the name! Your tears are reckoned in Heaven, where the Innocents sing ever your praise; and when you die, having known only the maternity of the heart, God calls you unto Him, very near the Throne!

XXXI

LOVE

LOVE is for the loving.

There is but one well in the world that grows ever the richer and sweeter and more plenteous by giving.

That well is the human heart and its living waters are those of love.

Yet herein is the wonder of it, that the man who thinks he hath need of it but seldom shall not at his desire get more than a scanty draught, and the sweet water shall turn bitter in his mouth.

Ye have heard it said, to him that hath shall be given: this is the meaning thereof.

Spend yourself in loving that you may be often athirst for the life-giving water. But count not to drink unto refreshing unless you come weary and blessed from the service of love. Then, ah then, the sweetness of the draught! . . .

WE are constantly seeking our own in dark-

ness and in light, awake or adream; reaching out our longing arms toward the Infinite; sending forth our filaments of thought; summoning the One who shall know and feel, with a passion of desire; praying for that rare response which crowns the chief expectancy of life. Not always do our arms fall empty; not always do our thoughts return to mock our vain quest; not always are our prayers unanswered and our hearts left void and cold.

I hold this to be of the true divinity of life, this kinship of the spirit which will leave no man or woman at rest, but ever insists upon working out its exigent yet benign destiny; forming those sweet and consoling relations which are our best joy here and may be our eternal satisfaction.

For the expectancy of love and sympathy—that is to say, understanding—is one that never dies in the human heart. I may be sad, or dull, or cold, or out of touch with reality; I may persuade myself that there is no longer any pith in my mystery; that the years have left me bankrupt in the essential stuff of life; that there is no remaining use for me under the sun. But let my heart be apprised, in the faintest whisper, of the advent or imminence of a new

friend, and lo! the world is fresh-made, the heavens constellated with hope and joy and wonder as on the first day.

Life is truly measured only by such love or expectancy; when that fails it is the same story for king and beggar.

Love is the summoner, love is the seeker, love the expectancy, and love the fulfilment. Blessed be Love!

I SPOKE some harsh words to my dear love, thinking myself in the right and forgetting the Law of Kindness. Then as I was turning away in anger, the sight of her pale face, with its mute reproach, smote me to the heart. I took her in my arms and we wept the most precious tears together. O divine moment, in that sacred hush, with her heart beating against mine, I seemed to be conscious of angels listening.

THOSE who are not in spiritual accord and understanding with us—that is to say, who do not truly love us—are as if they were not present in our lives, save for the unhappiness of an enforced relation with them. Twenty years' breathing the same air, living in the same house, even going through the physical forms

of the closest union, will not change the condition. At the end of that long period we are, by the Law of Spirit, as hopelessly separate, as mutually repellent as ever.

Love is akin to hate—how trite that is and how true! I sometimes wonder is either quality to be found unmixed with the other? Can we have love without hate or hate without love? The only glimpse of hatred I have ever had that quite appalled me was from one who loved me very much. Ah, happy they who neither love nor hate!

In love we must bleed and the wounds we receive are very cruel. Still it seems we can never have enough of them, for love has power to heal the wounds which it inflicts—and so we go on loving and bleeding to the end.

There is one thing of which I have never had my fill and for which my soul hungers always—love! And always I am promising myself that one day I shall be satisfied.

When I was younger there was nothing for me but a woman between the heavens and the earth. Now I perceive there are a few other things. Yet am I not old, as age is counted.

THE only man who has a right to despair of the world is he who neither loves nor is loved.

THERE is but one thing more interesting than a woman's love—her hate.

I HATE the woman who is not a mystery to herself as well as to me.

LOVE is a combat and friendship a duel. Strife is the law of existence.

LOVE is the *primum mobile*—the great motive which produces the miracles of genius and all that we recognize as the work of higher powers. Happy the artist whom it blesses and fructifies to the end!

I SHOULD never be weary of learning of women. I have long since tired learning of men.

LOOK back now over the long way and see if it be not love that has led you so far!

LOVE is the one dream that does not forsake us as we descend into the Valley, but is potent to bring joy or misery to the last.

To find the One who could love and feel and understand—this is the dream of many who yet remain faithful to their bonds.

WHAT is more terrible than the face of one who once loved and now hates you, seen in a dream!

HOW great the artist who should know woman to the soul, without giving up his freedom to her!

THIS earth, what is it but a vast cemetery, with the Rose of love and the Immortelle of remembrance!

XXXII

EPIGRAMS AND APHORISMS

THE wise gods, when they contrived this tragic comedy of life which we have been such a weary time a-playing, mixed up a little humor with the serious business. He alone plays his part well who finds the jest—the lath for the sword, the mask of Harlequin for the frozen face of Medusa. Those who have best solved the exquisite humor of the gods are called great by the general voice of mankind, and some dozen of them have lived since the world, or the play, began. Unlike these supremely gifted players, the vast majority of men get only the merest inkling of the gods' merry intent, but it suffices to save their lives from utter misery. Some devote themselves to solving the riddle with terrible seriousness, and the laughing god underneath always escapes them, leaving them empty-handed and ever the more tragically serious. These—and they are no small number—die in

madhouses or religion, or write books which increase the sorrow of the world: whatever their fate, life remains for them a tragedy to the end.

THERE came a Soul before the Judgment seat. And God said: Need there is none that We judge this man, for he hath given all his days to Evil; from his childhood he hath turned his back upon the City of Peace and none hath ever cleaved more to the sweetness of sin. Let him pronounce his own judgment and avow that he hath deserved the Evil Place.

Then the Soul cried out: It is true I have merited Hell by my iniquity, but this is not Thy justice.

And God said: What more canst thou ask, seeing that thou hast wrought judgment against thyself?

Then the Soul made answer: Send me to Heaven for the good I would have done!

LIFE is never simple to the divining spirit—every moment of the common day is charged with mystery and revelation.

ALL the great humorists are sad,—Cervantes, Molière, Swift, Sterne, Heine, Richter,

Balzac, Dickens,—for sadness is the penalty which Nature has annexed to that deep-searching knowledge of life we call humor. Hence is the tragedy of literature: if the man did not weep sometimes, we would cease to laugh at his jests;—in the end he weeps too much, and then we talk of the failure of his art!

I KNOW not why I sit under this lamp and write these lines—doubtless it has all been written before times out of mind. Could it be possible that I should have a single thought that never was vouchsafed to another? Or a single expression that has not at some time been turned by another pen? No, and again, No. What then is to do? Why nothing—but to write, and to keep on writing!

IT seems to be a fixed belief and an incurable superstition of the mediocre mind that great mental power is always accompanied by some moral handicap or abnormality. Hence the obscene legends spawned of the vulgar imagination, which are attached to so many famous and illustrious names. It is the toad's answer to the swan—the eternal penalty which mediocrity exacts of genius.

Few of a truth are the great artists and

poets who have escaped this penalty; nay, we are loth to grant them the highest merit should they lack the stigma of slander. Glory and Golgotha refuse to be separated!

Posterity is the hectic dream of the weak —it does not break the calm slumber of the strong. The man who works with his whole soul in the present, who possesses and is possessed by the time that has been allotted him out of all eternity,—that man may miss the prize as well as another. But he is headed the right way to capture the award of posterity.

Shakespeare erred in assigning only seven ages to man—there are at least seventy. Often we live through several in a single day—it all depends upon the kind of experience.

Why do we write for the world the things we would not say to the individual? Why do we send on every wandering wind the secrets we would not whisper in the ear of our chosen friend?

Remember that the true struggle of life is not to achieve what the world calls success, but to hold that Essential Self inviolate which was given you to mark your identity from all other

souls. Against this precious possession—this Veriest You—all winds blow, all storms rage, all malign powers contend. As you hold to this or suffer it to be marred or taken from you, so shall be your victory or defeat.

O MEMORY! thou leadest me back over the years and showest me many a place where once I would have lingered forever, but now thou canst not show me one of all where I would tarry again; my Soul knoweth that not a single step can be retraced, and that she is of the Infinite to be.

THE mystery of the Hereafter is very great indeed, but we may take courage in reflecting that with each day we leave some of it behind us.

MEN are always talking about truth, but there is really so little of it in common use that it might be classed with radium. Perhaps we should not know it if we saw it, for our experience deals almost wholly with substitutes.

IN making up the character of God, the old theologians failed to mention that He is of an infinite cheerfulness. The omission has cost the world much tribulation.

To preserve the freedom of your mind and the whiteness of your soul—that is to lead the life ideal.

BEGINNING as children, we walk away from God, and as old men we strive to totter back again.

GRIEVE not that you desire always and vainly—life without desire is very near unto death.

NATURE has no sorrows—perhaps that is why she is immortal.

NOT a single religion in the world credits God with a sense of humor. Perhaps this only proves how great a humorist he is!

AMONG persons whose lives touch at every point, there is often no communion of the soul for months and years. Were we to live only by the active life of the soul, our term would be as brief as that of the ephemera.

MEN are damned not for what they believe but for what they make-believe.

I AM not the man I was ten years ago. I should not know the boy I was were I to meet

him in the street. Time is ever stealing our outworn wardrobes of the flesh and spirit.

THE strongest writer smiles at the praise of his strength—he alone knows how weak he can be.

THE very meanest man I know believes for sure that God is made in his particular image and likeness.

XXXIII

SCRIP FOR YOUR PILGRIMAGE

CULTIVATE joy in your life and in your work. For indeed when you think of it, over-seriousness is the bane of art as of life. Nothing in art was ever done well that was not a joy in its conception. Travail the artist must, but in gladness. So of the perfect lyrist, we read that his song is a rapture poured forth from a heart that can never grow old.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS, the greatest master of narrative fiction that has ever lived, toiled all day and every day, laughing like Gargantua at the birth of his son; and sometimes weeping, too, over his own pathos. Ah, what would not one have given for the privilege of climbing the stairs stealthily to watch the merry giant at his task! Do you wonder that this rejoicing faculty furnished for many years the chief entertainment of Europe? I should not care

much for a writer incapable of being moved as Dumas was moved.

HAPPY the man who is wise enough to say, "Nay, Nay," and sidestep the Sphinx.

WHEN I come to die, I know my keenest regret will be that I suffered myself to be annoyed by a lot of small people and picayune worries, wasting God's good time with both.

MANY a man pretending to swallow the ass of Balaam of Beor has his way through life made easy for him. When will Stupidity cease to lay cushions for the feet of Hypocrisy?

THE wounds of self bleed always and will not be forgiven.

I NEED not write to my dear friend, for my heart talks to him every day over the miles. In this way, too, I tell him only the things I wish to tell him, and so have nothing to change or recall after the letter is sealed and sent. I was not always so wise.

THE better is enemy of the good, said William Morris. Do your stint to-day and let it go for what it is worth. All days are ranked equal in God's fair time. You can not steal

from to-day to give unto to-morrow, nor play at loaded dice with the Fates.

To move forward constantly in a straight line, without capitulation or compromise, has never been granted to any man born of woman. The white flags of truce flutter from every citadel.

If your friend were to show you his whole mind, you could not breathe the same air with him. Never forget that the closest friendship is only a truce.

Show your strength to the world, but beware how you betray your weakness, even to your dearest friend.

Your purpose—your purpose!—never forget that. I read an immense novel of Balzac's lately, and the one thing that has remained with me from it is this: "Can you go to sleep every night with one fixed purpose in mind and strengthen in it from day to day?" That is the question which every man must put to himself, and as he shall answer it, so shall be his success or failure.

The Talmud says: "There are three whose life is no life,—the Sympathetic man, the Iras-

cible, and the Melancholy". What chance for the unfortunate who is all three in one?

THE most obscure genius has consolations that outweigh the blazon of triumphant mediocrity.

IF it were not for this haunting distrust of self, this recurrent sinking of the heart, how easy the task would be!

CHOOSE with fear and trembling the hand from which you shall accept benefits.

A MAN may boast that he can judge himself as harshly as another, but he makes no mistake in passing sentence.

I AM thankful for your praise and I bow the neck to your censure; but I have that within which cheers more than the one and chastens more than the other.

THERE is hardly anything in the world you may not have if you can only make people believe that you accept them at their own valuation.

DO not fear the man who is quick to show his anger:—the deadliest antipathies I have

ever known were hidden in a smiling eye and a cordial hand-clasp.

THE conspiracy of authority, the conspiracy of wealth, the conspiracy of superstition and ignorance,—these are the forces that rule the world.

SANE persons will not expect to find absolute perfection in Heaven—there as here the charm of a little discontent, the satisfaction of turning up a small grievance, will not be denied us.

THE vice of the Pharisee is in believing that he is not like unto other men. The virtue of a man who knows himself a sinner is in believing that other men are not like unto himself.

THAT which was lately power is now impotence, but wait! it will soon be power again.

IT is something to have lived for the things of the mind, even though we have missed what the world calls wealth or success—those at least shall not be taken from us.

REVISE and revise and revise—the best thought will still come after the printer has snatched away the copy.

BALZAC laid the world under the greatest obligation of any modern man of letters, and was driven into an untimely grave by the spectre of debt. The highest service is always martyrdom.

A LEARNED young German philosopher, Dr. Otto Weininger, pronounced the most acute mind since Kant, not long ago solved the great problem of sex and then killed himself. What else was there for him to do?

EVERY little while it is announced that some scientist has pinned down the secret of life, but always the learned man has fooled himself. God will not be put into a chemical formula.

THOU art eager to be in company and delightest in the conversation of thy friends, yet thou hast a better friend than any of these who constantly solicit thee and whom thou wilt seldom hear—thy soul!

XXXIV

SONG OF THE RAIN

LONG time I lay in my bed listening to the rain.

In the hushed quiet of night, in the solemn darkness, my heart ceased its beatings to listen. There was naught in the world but my heart and the rain.

My soul awoke at the song of the rain, drenching through the trees, pattering on the roof, filling my chamber with coolness and the sense of a mystic presence. My soul awoke and deemed that it was the pause before the End.

Long I lay still in the darkness, hearing the song of the rain; feeling upon me and throughout me the balm and blessing of the rain; telling myself that if this were the End, it could not better be. My soul was all attention, eager to catch the word of its fate, my heart ceased its throbbing to listen—there was naught in the world but the rain and my heart.

What was the burden of the song of the rain that I heard as I lay still in my bed, wrapt in the solemn darkness, feeling as I shall feel in the pause before the End? What was the burden of the song of the rain which my soul awoke to hear and for which my heart stopped its beating?

Peace was the burden of the song of the rain that I heard in the deep of night when my soul thrilled like a wind-harp in the breath of God. Peace was the burden of the song of the rain.

Now have I put away all strife and anger and unrest since there came this wondrous message of the rain, the night and the silence. Now do I bear a quiet heart since my soul trembled like a wind-harp in the breath of God.

Peace for all the days that yet are mine when often I shall lie awake in the night silence, listening to the song of the rain.

Peace forevermore when my soul shall be drawn into the breath of God and my body mingled at last with the balm and blessing of the rain.

Peace forevermore!

L'ENVOI

NOTHING is easier than to win the favors of Our Lady of Art. You have only to serve her with all your heart, and all your soul, and, especially, all your time—she is a jealous mistress, as hath been said, and slow to forgive the neglect of a day or even an hour. You must forego many things that make for what the world calls fortune and success. You shall woo the shadow for your portion and leave to others the substance. And ever you shall toil with unwearied labor, while Age steals upon you and the gay procession of Youth passes by in mockery. The whitening hair, the flagging pulse, the stiffening limb, the broken slumber, the lamentable awakening—these things shall not trouble your perfect faith, for they are dear to Our Lady. It is not enough that you be patient—you must become patience itself, though each returning sun bring you the same tale of futility and disappointment. This shall sustain you, that

though Our Lady give no sign—not a flutter of the eyelids, not the hint of a smile at the corners of the mouth—still she sees and appraises your devotion. More than this you shall not ask if you be of the true elect. Yes, one thing more . . . just before you die she may give you her hand to kiss!

And this is all? No: some years after you are silent, with your hope and your despair, a little honor may be paid the dead man that was ever denied the living; and a few people may carelessly turn the pages of the Book for which in very truth you lived and died.

AD MAJORAM DEI GLORIAM

814M734a
An attic dreamer
00095080 7

814
M734a

189803

Monahan, Michael.
An attic dreamer.

814
M734a

189803

Monahan, Michael.
An attic dreamer.

WITHDRAWN

DREW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
MADISON, NEW JERSEY